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A
SHORT HISTORY
OF THE
WESTMINSTER FORUM:

CONTAINING,
SOME REMARKS UPON THE LAWS;
WHEREIN THE NATURE OF SUCH SOCIETIES
IS EXAMINED:
WITH
AN ABSTRACT OF EVERY EVENING'S DEBATE:
TOGETHER WITH
SOME LETTERS RELATIVE TO THE INSTITUTION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

BY THE PRESIDENT.

*Pulchrum est bene facere reipublicæ, etiam bene dicere haud
absurdum est. —SAL.*

L O N D O N, Printed :
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M.DCC.LXXXI.

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CONCERNING the following sheets, it may not be improper to state a few particulars.—I can affirm, the publication of them was not my primary idea in the composition, nor was thought of, till suggested by several very eminent literary characters, who perused the manuscript.

For my own use, or to amuse my private friends, I took as many notes during the debates as possible; which I employed my leisure hours in extending and arranging, — thereto adding, whatever aids a tolerable memory supplied: for the language then, I am wholly accountable. Being no Stenographer, many excellent speeches were lost, also many interesting anecdotes — many expressions of taste — flowers of rhetoric — pertinent allusions — bold flights of fancy — marks of genius — and dictates of maturest judgment. Writing from imperfect notes, rendered this unavoidable. Aware of this, we promised not the Speeches, but an abstract, or in other words, a sketch of them.

Having declined all personal references, not even printing the initials of the Speaker's names,

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we trust they cannot be displeased. If I have been fortunate enough to express justly, the sentiments of any of the truly ingenious Gentlemen, who honoured and supported the Forum; their acknowledging this, will be a sufficient compliment to me; and wherever I have failed, their silence will prevent the blame being imputed to them.

Many worthy and sensible people, without condescending minutely to examine the nature of such Societies, have, perhaps, rather too easily conceived the strongest prejudices against them; from the scope they give to men of a restless, factious spirit, to sow dissension in the minds of otherwise peaceable subjects. Symptoms of this never appeared, without my lamenting my authority was unable to check it. Such Societies, it must be confessed, might be better regulated; in which case, they would be more generally acceptable: still am humbly of opinion, that as they then stood, the advantages were superior to the contrary. Here, however, I shall not discuss the point.

No small satisfaction to me is, that as President, the Public thought me impartial; and it hath been my study, as far as the tenor of the debates permitted, to observe the same impartiality as a writer. If there were many Orationes, the beauties of which escaped my memory,

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mory, there were likewise numberless speeches, the violence and unjustifiable nature of which, disposed me to pass them over in silence.

The frequenters of the Forum, may probably remember many arguments, which they find not in these volumes, yet they may please such, from their being auxiliar to recollection. To weaker memories, the utility will be greater; and to those who never attended the Forum, they will afford some faint idea of the instruction and entertainment which took place there.

Not having time to ask the consent of each of the respectable list of subscribers, for printing their names — which certainly would have done honour to my page — I beg leave to return them, collectively, my most grateful thanks.

Equal care hath been taken this season, as the last, to take notes of the debates, and if the public deign to approve of this attempt, another may be made.

N. B. The typographical errors are so few, that we suppose the reader will be better pleased to mark them with his own pen, than to see a table of such trifling errata.

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A SHORT

A SHORT
HISTORY
OF THE
WESTMINSTER FORUM.

THE LAWS OF THE WEST-
MINSTER FORUM.

I.

AS many persons of rank and polite education have been deterred from entering into public debate, least they should meet with treatment from their opponents, inconsistent with decorum, and the laws of debate: Let it be therefore understood, that all personalities in debate, shall be held absolutely inconsistent with the constitution of this society; and whenever an offence against this law shall be committed, the law shall be read by

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the President, and no admittance to the gentleman, who shall be guilty of a second offence of this nature, unless a proper apology is made.

II.

As in the warmth of argument, expressions may inadvertently drop from the members, which were not intended as personal offence; the person who shall use them, shall have liberty to explain.

III.

As questions relating to points in Divinity, may open a door to Deism, Blasphemy, and Profaneness; and thereby give offence to the serious and well-disposed; such questions shall be prohibited by the constitution of this society.

N. B. This law is supposed not to be construed in so strict a sense, as to exclude all moral reflections.

IV.

The gentleman who shall first favour the society with his sentiments upon the question, shall have the exclusive privilege of concluding the debate, or waving his

his right in favour of another, and a sufficient time shall be allowed by the President for that purpose.

V.

No gentleman to be allowed to speak above fifteen minutes, unless the voice of the society is expressed in his favour, by the usual tokens of applause.

VI.

No gentleman shall be allowed to wander from the question, or be manifestly absurd, illiberal, or make use of indecent expressions; in this case, any member may call upon the chair to read the law, from whence there is to be no appeal. As this law may open a door to improper interruptions and ill-grounded charges; the person thus interrupted, shall always have the liberty of calling upon the chair, to take the sense of the society at large upon the propriety of his conduct, before he shall be supposed to have incurred the censure of the law.

VII.

The chairman shall govern the society by the laws and rules only; and when-

over an occurrence should happen, to which the constitution does not apply a remedy, the sense of the society to be taken, and the voice of the majority to be considered as absolute, provided their determination does not infringe these fundamental original laws.

VIII.

Every person entering this society is to be considered as tacitly consenting to its rules, and virtually governed by its laws: such persons as do not chuse to submit to these laws, are humbly intreated to absent themselves. Any person infringing the laws, will be considered as having offered an insult to the society at large, and every individual member thereof, and the chairman to be supported in the execution of his office, as long as he makes the constitution the rule of his conduct.

IX.

The chairman is to take the chair precisely at eight o'clock, and will take care to provide every thing necessary for the convenience and accommodation of the company;

company, and flatters himself, that the encouragement of the Public will be equal to his endeavours to please them. He does not presume to give any opinion of his own upon the points in controversy. The constitution now published shall be the only authority, under which he shall venture to regulate his conduct, and wishes to be considered in no other light, than the humble vehicle, through which the constitution is to be administered to the members.

X.

Though this institution is intended for the benefit and instruction of the Public at large, and is open to every man who behaves himself agreeable to the laws of decorum; yet it is seriously recommended, that none but persons properly qualified, by character and education, will venture to obtrude their sentiments upon this society, which we hope will be considered as a proper school for those, who are intended for the Pulpit, Bar, or Senate.

XI.

No questions will be admitted for discussion until they have been previously read twice, and approved of at two preceding meetings, to prevent the too hasty introduction of improper questions,

REMARKS

REMARKS

UPON THE FOREGOING LAWS.

THAT absolute perfection is unattainable upon earth, whatever the nature of the object may be, is an axiom applicable to nothing with greater propriety than legislation, in the most extensive meaning of the term. Man, even in the highest æra of civilization, and notwithstanding the closest connections which that implies, is yet a creature so different from all others, nay, frequently from himself, he is so flexible under, however dependent upon, the vicissitudes of age, climate, religion, rank, constitution, and education, that no code or system of laws to regulate his public and private conduct, ever was or can be devised, but what must incur the lesser evil, in order to obtain the greater good. The wisdom of the legislature displays itself with the greatest lustre, in adopting the

fittest means to prevent, as much as possible, the former, while they facilitate the latter. In a word, the end of legislation is the benefit of mankind; and the steady avowal of this hath been the very basis of securing compliance with the laws, and of giving dignity to the character of the first lawgivers.

No doubt several other circumstances were requisite to establish legislation on a respectable and permanent footing. Religion, in a special manner was one. Owing to which, there is scarce a legislator recorded in ancient history, but what pretended to revelation, or some species of divine assistance, in forming his institutions.

Thus Amasis and Mnevis, lawgivers of the Egyptians, affirmed they had received their laws from Mercury. Zoroaster, the lawgiver of the Bactrians, and Zamolxis, lawgiver of the Getae, pliqued themselves upon the manner in which they had been owned by Vesta. Zatheustes, the lawgiver of the Arimaspi, said he was familiar with a good spirit or genius. Rhadamanthus and Minos, lawgivers of Crete, and Lycaon, lawgiver of Arcadia, pretended to intercourse with Jupiter. Triptolemus, lawgiver of the Athenians, affected to be inspired by Ceres. Pythagoras, lawgiver of the Crotoniates, and Zaleucus with Charondas of the Locrians, and of the Chalcidic cities of Italy and Sicily, ascribed

ed their laws to Minerva. Lycurgus of Sparta, who was the cotemporary of the two last-named legislators, said, that he received his instructions from Apollo: and Romulus, with Numa of Rome, acknowledged their obligations to superior powers; the one to Consus, the other to the goddess Egeria.

This truly political method of acting, was closely imitated by the founders of the great outlying empires, as Sir William Temple calls them. Thus the founder of the Chinese monarchy was called Fagfour, or Fanfur, the Son of Heaven, as we are told by the Jesuits, from his pretensions to that relation. The Royal Commentaries of Peru, as they are called by Warburton, in his Divine Legation of Moses, inform us, that the founders of that empire were Mango Copac and his wife and sister Coya Mama, who proclaimed themselves the son and daughter of the Sun, and sent from their father to reduce mankind from their savage bestial life, to one of order and society.—Thor and Odin, the lawgivers of the Western Goths, pretended likewise to inspiration, and even to divinity. The bold and insolent claims to heavenly assistance, advanced and asserted by Mahomet, the leader and prophet of the Arabians, are universally known. The race of these inspired lawgivers seems to have ended
in

In Genhisean, the great founder of the empire of the Moguls.

All these were men of an excellent spirit, who, considering the periods and countries they lived in, along with the characters, and either casual or local circumstances of those to whom they dictated, were singularly beneficial to their fellow-citizens, and entitled to the veneration of mankind. Did we at the same time minutely scrutinize their separate codes, we should be obliged oftener to praise the intention than the effect. In spite of all the divine assistance they received, not only glaring omissions, but also material errors, not only faults, but injustice itself might be found.—Is this really fact?—Would it not be unfair, and argue an extreme want of candour, to expect, much more to insist upon, perfection in the lawgiver of the Westminster Forum? who, I dare say, never dreamed, much less boasted, of any supernatural assistance whatever, in the composition of his code?—Angels and ministers of grace defend us!!!—What a fall was there! From talking of the most celebrated and pompous names of antiquity, immediately to descend to perhaps some writer in a news-paper, is a bathos indeed! To draw the least allusion, or even, in hyperbole, connect those who gave laws to empires, and whose

whose names stand foremost in the lists of fame, with the compiler of a few plain simple regulations for a disputing society, forces us to exclaim with Roderick Random, "Comparisons are odious." Well—and what then? Why should not a bathos in prose be tolerated, as well as in poetry?—That couplet of Swift's, which illustrates this, hath had its admirers:

And thou Dalhousie, thou great God, of War,
Lieutenant-Colonel to the Earl of Mar.

We say, however expressive of the matter in question the above is in poetry, yet daily instances no less so, may be collected from the pulpit, from the press, at the bar, nay, within the walls of St. Stephen, as well as in Coach-makers Hall, or the Westminster Forum.—Should this allusion be deemed an inadequate apology for my Centaurean kind of introduction, or rather connection of two parties possessing not the least similitude, or having any one quality in common, save that the intentions of both, each in their way, were good, I may further urge, that as truth can never suffer by comparison, so the dignity of any illustrious character cannot be impaired, though it may be rendered more conspicuous when contrasted with inferiority. Were this likewise held to be incompetent, we must plead the privilege of the Mantuan Swain, who drew his ideas of Rome

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from

from the neighbouring village; nor imagined he was wrong in comparing great things to small.

So much for my introduction, and the defence of it.—I have already owned, that the intentions of the legislator of the Forum were doubtless good; yet his candour will condescend to hear my remarks upon his laws; being firmly persuaded, that, in some respects, I may censure where his own judgment must discern the justness, whilst my other observations shall point out a few of those rocks on which societies of this nature frequently split, or tend to give us an idea of a something more perfect that might yet be attempted in this line.

The offering these remarks is an easy and impartial task to me, when at the present moment I declare, that though I have been for ten weeks last past the president of that Forum, the writer of these laws is totally unknown to me, nor did I ever once ask his name.

Now to the subject.—The language is sometimes not correct; but that is easier excused than its obscurity in some places. Witness the very first rule, where the reason assigned why persons of rank and polite education have been deterred from entering into public debate, is, "least they should meet with treatment from their opponents, inconsistent with decorum" and

" and the laws of debate." This last expression needs explanation, since the most illiterate disputant, besides his want of good-breeding, always thinks he has a right to say what he doth say. The laws of debate both result from, and ultimately rest upon, the characters of the speakers. If they are persons used to good company, their arguing will be regulated by their own feelings; whereas, if from an opposite class, propriety may receive a wound, perhaps in every sentence, uttered by such. In fine, it is a term of a very vague signification; nor can it be denied, that to have limited the import thereof, would have been more regular and distinct.

The second rule is exceeding just, and conveys a privilege which prevents any affront being given or received, and is of that sort which every gentleman would wish to enforce, and what the most cautious and best-guarded speaker in the world may at times have occasion to plead.

Nor does the third rule yield in utility to the second, since too great a respect and reverence for sacred things cannot be enjoined. To the shame of this enlightened age, religion is but too openly scoffed at, and the basest sarcasms thrown upon its heavenly truths: though the noblest cause, it hath the fewest advocates.

Wherever

Wherever points in divinity are agitated, there should be nothing else admitted; consequently, gentlemen aware of this, would come with minds rather attuned to the subjects, and under a kind of pious awe. To mix these with political and other matters, is just the subverting those impressions; and from the desultory, if not impious, manner in which they are handled, prove in the end prejudicial to the real interests of virtue and goodness. It was wise then, in the lawgiver of the Westminster Forum, entirely to exclude all such questions. Even this is not sufficient: there should be authority vested in the president, to reprove any speaker who makes quotations from Scripture, or uses the figures or language thereof in a ludicrous way.

The fourth law is just, requisite, and indeed essential to the cause of truth: for as the first speaker is liable to animadversions from all the rest, it is nothing but common justice, that he be allowed to defend himself; and it being easier to obscure arguments than to confute them, truth might suffer, were not that darkness dispelled.

To the fifth, no objection arises, except what he who framed it cannot be charged with; namely, That from the peculiar humour and sickleness of a British audience, it is seldom
 ever

ever attended to. We generally perceive the tokens of applause, at least what is tantamount, the cry of Go on, Go on, re-echoed from every corner of the room, the moment the president informs any member that he hath had the time allowed, though probably his speech is ridiculously weak, foolish, or foreign to the question in debate; while the very same audience, ere the next minute be ended, are equally vociferous in calling upon the chair, either to fix to the question, or to silence the speaker. Such inconveniences will obtrude, except where the societies are, strictly speaking, philosophical, like those at universities, and admission granted to none, save persons of liberal education.

The observation wherewith we conclude our remarks upon the foregoing law, may justly be applied to the first clause of the sixth. However proper the means, for the attainment of the ends, a perversion of the one must invariably destroy the other. To the shame of gentlemen met for instruction be it said, that evident breaches in the means of gaining it, revives their languishing attention, excites their mirth, and seems the vehicle of their entertainment. An argument conducted in a cool, rational, and logical manner, unaided by striking eloquence, fancy, wit, or eminent singularity in the speaker, will not always please, much less convince the
major

major part of these public societies; whereas flimsy declamation, tolerably well mouthed, flashes of fancy, an impudent face, awkward singularities, or manifest absurdities peculiarly expressed, will frequently set them in a roar; and indelicate innuendos, or phrases bordering upon indecency, will brighten up the countenances, if not, for minutes, subvert all order, by burying the sense of propriety. Should any judicious individual reprobate this, and call to order, it is ten to one but he will be hissed: should he escape this, he will, in the general opinion, be set down as a person void of taste; a phrase oftener in the mouths of those who the least understand its real import.

The seventh is unquestionably a very proper law, and the sense of the majority of the society most certainly becomes sufficient grounds for the president to go by; yet, when we reflect that the members of one night may happen to be of a cast widely different from those of another night; and that it might fall out so, as that their decision, if adhered to, might, on the whole, injure the society, it seems more eligible to submit the various incidents for which there is no express law, to the good sense of the president, who may reasonably be supposed more acquainted with the spirit of the society, and more immediately concerned in its prosperity.

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As to the eighth, it may appear frivolous to say, that in one part the punctuation is wrong; otherwise the connection is injudicious, the phrase exceptionable, and the sense doubtful. The individual members of that society will never account an infringement of its laws an insult to themselves. Though susceptible of irritation, while the breach is making, or apt to be much out of temper in discerning any flagrant impropriety, scarce shall they have got home, before it is entirely forgot. The expression "every individual member thereof, and the chairman to be supported in the execution of his office, as long as he makes the constitution the rule of his conduct," is quite an unjust arrangement; since by previous articles, the privileges and protection of members are amply stated and provided for. The phrase, "execution of office," applies not to them, for they have no office; though when confined to the president, it merits the strictest attention. The principal business of a society, at its first outset, is to chuse a president properly qualified; and their own advantage is then enhanced, by their supporting him with firmness. Indeed, so long as he discharges his duty with accuracy and impartiality, their pride should lead them to this conduct. Whatever impairs his importance, lessens the respectability of the society. Few, if any, ever

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denied the utility of such institutions as the Westminster Forum, when under prudent restrictions : and what hath most materially baulked this, hath assuredly been the placing persons, of neither address nor learning, in the chair. Allowing their private character to be ever so amiable, it will on enquiry be found, that gentlemen of politer rank, and more liberal education, refuse to take parts in the debate, merely from an internal disgust they feel at addressing themselves to such persons. Those of the learned professions especially, will ever be shy of doing it. Nor are their motives for doing so to be altogether condemned. We rarely submit our opinion with complacency, but to a judgment apprehended to be superior or equal to our own.

The ninth law needs a peculiar explanation. In many cases servility even of language, though not of temper, produces consequences equally bad as presumption ; but then this greatly depends upon the circumstances and character of those, who use either the one or the other. When this law was framed, probably the character of the president of the Forum was left to future deliberation. A gentleman of the smallest consequence in the literary world, would not abjectly renounce his power or right of judging

judging on the points in controversy. Nor, eager as he might be for the welfare of the society, vigilant of its honour, or uniform in acting under the spirit of its constitution, could he so injure his own feelings as to admit, that the prudent Regulator of philosophical, moral, commercial, and political discussions, degenerated into a humble vehicle of a society, consisting of persons so different in rank, ability, and turn of mind. The framer of the law may have adopted this excessive humility, purposing to serve the proprietor of the Forum, who is a valuable, friendly, and worthy gentleman, on the supposition that he meant to keep the chair, which positively he never did—or that, if he had intended it, the indulgence and steady encouragement of the public should then have been given him.

The tenth law breathes a worthy spirit, and is founded on strict propriety, though, like many other laws under the same predicament, yet of a far higher import, is, after all, most commonly broke. Politics is the science of the day, about which he who writes the most, or talks the loudest, frequently understands the least; yet to write and talk on the subject, almost what he pleases, is now deemed to be, as it were, the birth-right of every Englishman. That many such speakers ought to be checked, and at times

severely reprov'd, admits not the least dispute : wisely and cautiously however must this be done, to preserve the dignity of the giver, while it gains compliance, without offending the person who receives it. The moment it is attempted, how often doth not simply the object of it, but the society at large, announce it as their opinion, that such interruptions are inconsistent with the nature of free debate? That method which bids fairest to displease the least, of putting an effectual stop to low illiterate men obtruding their sentiments, is universally to support the chair in calling such to order. Unfortunately for those fond of rational entertainment, it happens that a British audience, on these occasions, practise what their glorious constitution boasts of in the distribution of justice, " Better ten rogues escape than one honest man suffer." So they in public assemblies will rather bear with the prattle of absurdity in ten fools, than curtail or infringe the liberty of speaking in one Englishman. It is vastly to be regreted, that gentlemen of classical erudition have been so backward in giving sanction by their speeches to such places as the Westminster Forum. The manner in which they were conducted, no doubt, was one chief reason. Every thing which makes them resemble an ale-house, must necessarily sink their value in the estimation

tion of the discerning part of mankind, and forever prevent their arriving at eminence and general respect. At this very period, owing to skilful and prudential management, the Westminster Forum is in the most flourishing condition. It is crowded, and that too by a genteel set of people : nor hath it any how lost its pre-eminence as to the cast of the speakers, these having been of a rank and character superior to what generally appear on such occasions. In this society noblemen have not disdained to shew both their good sense and their elocution.—Another cause why a scarcity of speakers sometimes prevails in such places, is a too great timidity, the usual concomitant of merit : this is often the sole obstacle to our enjoying the sage reflections of the maturest judgment, and the best-improved minds ; while self-sufficiency, joined to a certain quantum of impudence, renders others both tedious, forward, and troublesome. Speakers who are continually making digressions, who grasp at every far-fetched figure, and run after the most inapplicable allusions, who take all arguments at diagonals rather than straight lines ; imitating a traveller, who by way of getting soon to London from Hammersmith, should shape his journey through Hampstead and Highgate : such are to societies of free debate what slow poisons are to the body. Unseen

and imperceptible in their first operations, they are equally sure and fatal in their consequences. We believe it remains a problem hitherto unsolved, whether a tedious formal speaker, or one petulant and presuming, be the most disgusting. But to return to the subject of the law :—we cannot better allure gentlemen of solid learning to speak in these assemblies, than by assuring them, that the experience of many personages the most distinguished for pulpit, forensic, or senatorial eloquence, have owned their obligations to societies of the above nature, not solely at universities and other public seminaries, but also elsewhere established. To speak with judgment, depends on genius, culture, and assiduity in study : but to speak with gracefulness and ease, in a great measure, results from habit. And the essential service which this latter attainment is of to truth, need not here be mentioned. That truth so seldom pleases, is not to be ascribed so much to the disinclination of the human mind to receive it, as to the unanimated or ungracious mode in which, by many of its professed friends, it is conveyed to us. Let the indefatigable pains which the prince of orators took to cure some natural impediments of speech, prove to us the value of the art in general ; to which add, that by this art alone, the worse is often made appear the better cause.

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The eleventh and last rule is a good one, however inadequate to the end it has in view. In societies like the Forum, not an improbable method of preventing the admission of improper questions, is, the investing the president with the discretionary power of reading or not reading publicly, the questions that he may receive. For, among those submitted to the sense of the society, such an inattention to their genuine meaning reigns; and so little thought is taken of the knowledge requisite to discuss them, that out of those who hold up their hands to receive them, scarce one in ten understand the parts of the question, or even the import of the terms. Another disadvantage is, that most of the questions given in, are never owned by the proposers, whereby much time is lost, and the patience of the audience worn out, ere another ventures to adopt them. If it be a general axiom, that the anxiety of disappointment is in proportion to the height of expectation, how painful to the lovers of instruction must be those minutes which flow without the means of it, especially in those places where we not only expect it, but have been wont to receive it? Although a man may think justly, and write sensibly, who possesses neither ability nor courage to speak publicly: in such cases as these, none, save those who will avow and defend

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questions,

questions, should give them in. Nor is it to be dreaded, that a scarcity would thereupon ensue, since it should be the president's care to supply the society with those that either arise from the topics of the times, the casualties of public concerns, or bid the fairest to attract general notice, to raise curiosity, and engage young and studious minds to aspire after scientific excellence; while the discussion of these questions shall tend to enlarge the ideas, to render precise and elegant the mode of expressing them, under no restraints, except those of virtue, and the leading interests of morality.

THE Westminster Forum opened on the 20th of September 1779, with the following question :

Whether the charge against the members of Opposition, of endeavouring to foment the rebellion in America, to answer the personal views of power, emolument, and ambition, can be supported upon principles of truth and justice ?

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27th, 1779.

THE following question was debated :

Whether it is not the duty of every good subject, in the present critical state of the empire, to unite for the defence of the empire at large, by a dutiful and loyal representation, humbly to implore his Majesty to withdraw his troops from America, in order to regain the valuable commerce of that country ?

OCTO-

OCTOBER 4th, 1779.

THE following question was debated :

Whether the present mode adopted by the Ministry, of carrying on the war, by burning and destroying towns, &c in America, is not more likely to create eternal enmity, than a reconciliation with the Colonies ?

Mr. G——d was in the chair the nights the three above questions were agitated, and it was omitted to mark in the president's book the decision of them. It doth not appear that any abstract of the arguments then adduced was taken, and not being present, we are unable to give any account of them.

During the above period we find, however, that the Westminster Forum did not escape public notice, nor the rectitude of the president screen him from censure : Indeed what public station of any kind is there, which doth not lay open to criticism or invective ?

In the infant state of the society, a letter appeared in the Morning Post, signed Q in the Corner. The writer admitted the utility of the Institution,

institution, even thought the place, whereat it was held, to be very central, for a number of genteel people who would probably resort thither: but with all the fullness of ill-nature arraigned the president; and in terms, which said as little for his politeness, as the purport of his letter in general, did for his candour, reflected on every part of the proprietor's conduct in the chair.

I have often heard the proprietor say—he had every reason in the world, short of being able to convict him, for believing, that the author was one, who professed himself a friend to him and to the design. To get at the truth, if possible, he charged him personally with it—while the gloomy soul, not only evaded confession, but obstinately denied—by urging the commonplace argument—“Can you suspect me, who am ready and willing to serve you?” Ought we ever to wonder, that a bad man wants the courage to own, what his conscience tells him is wrong?

Some friend of the proprietor's answered the letter, under the signature of an Occasional Correspondent. *Q* in the Corner replied—So did his opponent—And if any reader wishes to peruse the letters themselves, he will find them in the Morning Post for October 1779.

The frivolous nature of the altercation needs

no

no further comment. Its insipidity was well observed by the antagonist to Q in the Corner. The objections against Mr. G——d, advanced by the latter gentleman, seem merely imaginary, as they are totally unsupported by illustrations of their reality. Why did he not mention some of the blunders, and adduce proofs of the illiteracy of the man he accuses. Since he hath not deigned to do this, what he asserts to the contrary must go for nothing. His epithets are, besides being lavished without just grounds, chosen without judgment. For, admitting Mr. G——d had failed in supporting the dignity of the chair, what man in his senses could account it to be any disgrace to him?

On the 11th of OCTOBER, 1779,

THE chair was taken by the Rev. D——

T——r, A. M. of Woolwich, Kent, as fixed president of the Westminster Forum; who, even the first night, had the pleasure to find himself incircled by upwards of 130 gentlemen, and a few ladies; whom he addressed in the following manner:

GENTLEMEN,

Permit me to congratulate you on the fair prospect of success to the Westminster Forum, which the company of to-night justifies me in cherishing. It would be superfluous to describe to you, or the intelligent part of mankind—the numerous advantages which institutions of this nature are adapted to procure. Empires and kingdoms, as well as more humble and ordinary societies, whether of a religious or civil kind, have had their cradles, by which we mean their era of infancy and weakness. Nor hath it seldom been remarked, that from the smallest beginnings the greatest and most flourishing have arisen. This holds good of every species of community—that unless fortuitous circumstances are in their favour on their first establishment;

blishment; and unless their primary exertions are directed by a tender, yet firm, and skilful hand, they must dwindle into insignificance.

The individual who plans any thing for the promotion of knowledge and virtue, is a worthy member of the community to which he belongs. From a variety of causes, however, we find many such attempts prove ineffectual, nay sometimes overwhelm the very institutor with misfortune: in the case before us we are not sure of success, much less can we command it; but we beg leave to assure you, Gentlemen, that it shall be our most assiduous endeavour to deserve it. We have laid the foundation, it is yours to rear the building. What avails it that our intentions are laudable? Since without your kind patronage and encouragement they cannot be useful.—This once secured, we shall rise into consequence and attract esteem. The situation of this place is unquestionably in our favour. Previous to our institution—those who valued such places, were obliged to go far, which might neither agree with their constitutions, nor be compatible with their other necessary avocations. Now it is in the power of, and we trust will be convenient to many learned and respectable gentlemen, without risking their health, or neglecting their other pursuits, to spend a part of the evening at least in the channel of instruction.

struction. In this dissipated age, we laud, and to the utmost of our power do bless, whatever bears the semblance of rational entertainment.

Believe me, Gentlemen, the Westminster Forum originates neither from contempt, nor mean rivalry of any other society of the like nature: while, nevertheless, we flatter ourselves, the wonted candour of a British audience will indulge our hoping, that we shall emulate all others in logical reasoning—depth of judgment—and genteelness of arguing. Granting our Forum may not, as the ancients, be able to quote or produce a Cicero—a Hortensius—a Cotta—we earnestly expect, that it will have the honour to be frequented by those, who for the accomplishments of both scholars and gentlemen, shall invigorate their own consciousness of merit, and throw a beautiful reflection upon human nature.

As to myself, who now address you from this chair for the first time, owing to the recommendation of some learned friends, give me leave to declare from the bottom of my heart,—that I will uniformly study the prosperity of this society, by a steady observance of its laws, and by the most sedulous and well-meant endeavours to gain your approbation. If I succeed in this—nothing shall damp my efforts to please you; whereas, if unfortunate, and unacceptable to the majority of you, remain assured—no
earthly

earthly motive could induce me to keep the place I now hold. While I am lucky enough to please, grant me your protection ! and without this last voluntarily granted, none will be readier than I, to acquiesce in your choice of another.

THIS introductory speech being delivered, the question for the evening's debate was read :

Whether public or private Education, is the best calculated, to form a Man for Society ?

The gentleman who opened the question, spoke in favour of a public education ; though he was somewhat unlucky in his arguments. He thought the boy who robbed an orchard might come afterwards to take a city. He said a public education peculiarly tended to expand the faculties of the mind ; and, besides calling the latent powers into use and frequent exertion, often enabled it to acquire those which otherwise it might never have been supposed to possess. Thus many a boy, whose genius for the finer arts would have remained unknown, by hearing others sing, seeing them draw, and the like,

like, gradually mingling in these at first innocent pastimes ;—afterwards made capital figures in such sciences.

The second speaker warmly contended for a private education. He took a wide range on the subject, and, added to many remarks, but little if at all connected with the question; founded his objections to a public, on the carelessness of university professors, or heads of public seminaries of learning, who generally entrusted the instruction of the pupil to tutors, a set of men for the most part dependant, and who, afraid of offending, seldom presumed to remove their prejudices, or to combat their passions: but, rather wishing to secure future promotions in life, put themselves to no great pains to inform their judgments, if contrary to their own desires. The professors he described as men, who having attained the zenith of their respective lines in life, and for the most part past the meridian of their years, conceived ease more suited to their constitution than laborious study; or the fatigue arising from sedulously watching the passions of their pupils. Admitting these turned out bad, the fault was ascribed to secondary causes and casual circumstances, not to them. This led him to consider the morals of youth: which he judged invariably more attended to in private than public tuition, particularly from the care

the parent was at in chusing what he called a Mentor for his son ; whereby he meant a man of knowledge, of approved goodness of heart ; purity of morals, and sage experience in the wily maze of human affairs. Be the character of the parent what it would, he affirmed the strength of parental feelings was such, that he would be at every possible pains in finding out a proper person to inspect and form the temper and understanding of his son : nay, that were he deceived, the being under his own eye would soon lead to a discovery of the mistake.

Several speakers after this gentleman pursued the same track of reasoning, and further urged : that where the attention of the master was confined to a single pupil, more might be learned, than could possibly be the case where it was more diffuse, and obliged to consider a variety of dissimilar geniuses—tempers—and constitutions. They argued, that in all public seminaries or schools, in order to do justice to the whole, there was a necessity to put them into classes, where very often an excellent genius and a studious boy was retarded on account of a blockhead or a trifier. The impossibility of classing pupils of equal abilities together, they pictured in the strongest terms. What is more—these classes must consist of boys unequal in their progress, from their having been a longer
or

or shorter time at school—some will be learning this branch of knowledge, others a quite different: one scholar may most relish that which best he knows, another may be just the reverse. Some tempers are solely moved by chastisement, and rough usage; the very idea or sight of this damps others: some constitutions can bear, nay require, what might probably destroy those of a more tender and delicate texture. An instance of this, among many others that might be quoted, was, that of a gentleman, at this present time well known in the world. When at school, the master prescribed a lesson to the class in which this young gentleman happened to be, telling them, that he would give a sound box on the ear to whoever could not say it: the master kept his word—he of whom we speak, unfortunately received such a box on the ear, that though by the advice of physicians he was sent to the West Indies and other warm climates, yet, after having tried every expedient, he is dull to this day, so that you cannot make him hear, but by speaking extremely loud.

The gentlemen on the other side of the question, began, by shewing that man was designed an active being, by the Supreme Author of his existence, and consequently, whatever more immediately led him to action, and produced the most resolute and vigorous exertions of these faculties,

cukies, must certainly be the most advantageous for all the purposes of social life. They thought it a self-evident maxim, that, the above position granted, a public was infinitely preferable to a private education. Here example became the parent of action, and emulation, one of the noblest passions in the soul, proved the incentive to excellence. They blamed their opponents for asserting without proving, that nothing but vice is to be learned at public seminaries, and only virtue to be acquired in a private education. It was argued, that consorting with the servants—the usual case of those educated at home—might lead to the imbibing more low—cunning—mean habits and vicious inclinations, than the examples thereof at public seminaries might produce. They retorted, that if, as had been said by their antagonists—one vicious boy might spoil the whole, the chances were equal, that one virtuous boy might captivate the whole. The perfections of the immaculate Mentor, as he had been described, were also scrutinized, and were supposed to accord better with his own expectations of settlements from the family, than the progress of his pupil—the inability of the greater number of parents to chuse a Mentor—the whims of a vain or ignorant mamma after he was chosen, of whom the preceptor often stood vastly more in awe than his

his pupil did of him : nay, the places where such characters were looked for, and whence they were selected (viz.) universities, with such-like, were viewed as separate arguments in favour of a public education. A noble Lord, who honoured the Westminster Forum when in this its infant state, not only with his presence, but with his sentiments on the same side of the question, drew in very lively colours the despicable figure of a book-worm, which was the frequent result of private tuition. In this state, he said books were read—but man not studied—the memory was replenished—the understanding, perhaps, crowded with ideas—still the individual unfitted for social life, and the character by no means regulated or established. This noble Lord contended, that the knowledge of human nature, at once the most valuable and useful of all mortal attainments, was easier got at public schools : to illustrate as well as prove which, he remarked that the best and greatest figures in the several walks of life, had been indisputably made by those publicly educated.

These, with many other sensible arguments, ingeniously advanced, induced the company almost unanimously, there being but four dissentients, to give their suffrage for a public education.

OCTOBER 18th, 1779.

Is Refinement of Manners to be considered as being most conducive to Virtue or Vice ?

IN mixed assemblies we seldom find that philosophical questions meet with a favourable reception : nor will this create wonder, if we reflect how few, comparatively speaking, are acquainted with themselves, or know the various uses to which their faculties are really subservient. Only a small number will blush for their ignorance in matters of this kind ; while almost every one esteems himself competently skilled in the history of the constitution, nor hesitates to deliver his sentiments upon the nicest or most intricate points in politics. After all, it must be confessed, that whenever such questions are debated with propriety, the audience are more united in their applause, and seem peculiarly charmed : no despicable proof of what the native bias of the soul would be, were it not for the prejudices of education, and influence of bad example.

Another reason, which frequently damps the consideration of moral questions, is the indefinite terms wherein they are expressed. Very often

often it falls out, that the words which seem in the opinion of the proposer fitted to convey only such an idea, produce a quite different, in the mind of those to whom the question is submitted. Were this more regarded, and greater caution used in the stating of them, much frivolous altercation would be prevented, and higher satisfaction reaped in the disquisition.

The above question, as it appeared in the view of the society, was an illustration hereof. It had been given in by an amiable young gentleman, just come from Eton College. He had spoken in the debates of the two preceding evenings with universal approbation. His voice was clear and harmonious, his language truly classical, his diffidence natural to his youth, nor would his sentiments have disgraced the hoary sage.

When he opened the question, he acknowledged that he was rather undetermined as to his own opinion, seeing by the proposal he had chiefly considered the lights he might receive from the sentiments of others. He only ventured to direct the attention of the society to the case of Greece and Rome, and indeed to most of the Asiatic nations, whether they were not more virtuous before the refinement of their manners was so great, which rather inclined

him to think that it conduced more to vice than to virtue.

Some gentlemen who followed him, objected to the term refinement, at least to what might be its supposed import in the present question. If taken extensively, they apprehended the solution to be easy; since there could be no doubt but that a state of improved society, was preferable to one rude and barbarous: the very idea of the one, precluded the being and exercise of a thousand virtues, without which the other could not exist.

Others, entering more minutely into the debate, insisted that refinement succeeded commerce, and that commerce introduced not only luxury, but those arts of duplicity, which warped or obscured the genuine feelings of the breast. They said hypocrisy was never practised except where there was a chance of its being profitable. This not being the case in the earlier periods of human society, and there being less occasion for, because fewer, if any advantages resulted from specious pretences, they judged refinement of manners to be more conducive to vice. From these as premises, it was further inferred; that savages were of a better heart than those in polished life, that is, were more open and honest in their words and actions. Admit they were sometimes violent, it proceeded from necessity, whereas

whereas in civilized countries, without this motive, instances of fraud and oppression abounded, and, what deepened the affliction, after every profession of the contrary. States, it was affirmed, in their infancy were honest, though not polite; whereas in a state of refinement the reverse took place, namely, politeness without integrity. We were again directed to the historic page, which would inform us, that nations fell whenever their manners went beyond a certain degree of refinement. It plainly appeared that those who spoke in this manner, viewed refinement of manners, as simply implying excessive luxury and effeminaey.

Their antagonists contended, that in as much as civilization excelled barbarity, so far did refinement of manners prove more conducive to virtue than to vice. The good qualities of a barbarian, from the nature of things, must be few, and these circumscribed within a narrow sphere, even in which their operations were specially limited. Here, the difficulty of providing for the wants of nature, debars the indulging or acting in conformity to the nobler feelings of humanity. Heroism and clemency are the two principal virtues, which the ruder periods of society can display. But in a state of refinement the attainments of knowledge give wings to virtue, as well as stability to our notions

notions of it—the honours paid to it are more valuable and lasting—every object, and every relation, properly weighed and understood, not only heighten moral obligation, but also allure to the fulfilment of its demands, consequently must be conducive to virtue.

This subject, however much might have been said upon it, was rather languidly handled, and at last the suffrage of the majority declared—That refinement of manners was more conducive to virtue.

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 25th, 1779.

Can the conduct of the Minister, in preventing a gentleman from vacating his seat, with the intention of becoming a candidate for another place, be warranted by the constitution, when he assigns as the reason, that he hath given an absolute promise to another ?

THIS question was truly the topic of the day—every one talked upon it : the freeholders of Middlesex, though chiefly interested, conceived, that through their sides the constitution was stabbed ; and therefore, not contented with uttering the loudest complaints in behalf of themselves, like true patriots they endeavoured to sound the alarm to others. Most of the arguments used at the Forum being hackneyed in all the news-papers, justifies our being concise in recapitulating this debate ; lest now it might be doubted whether we copied from our notes, or from the latter.

The gentleman who opened the debate, considering the importance of the contest, viewed it in a very serious manner, and from the conduct of the Minister in the affair, called it a haughty despotic stride towards destroying the
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freedom

freedom of election, that basis of the British constitution. At the time of this contest both of them were members of parliament: George Byng esq, represented the borough of Wigan in Lancashire, and George Forster Tufnell sat for Beverly in Yorkshire. Every speaker allowed both of them to be Gentlemen of the most respectable and amiable characters—both in the minority, and hitherto true to their principles. The advocates for Mr. Byng strongly depicted the incongruity of Colonel Tufnell's behaviour on the occasion, alledging that he had not been uniform in his professions, at one time insinuating that he wished not to enter the lists with Mr. Byng, as a candidate to succeed the late Serjeant Glyn in the representation of the county of Middlesex; yet afterwards availing himself of partial, nay packed meetings of the Freeholders in his favour. The friends of Colonel Tufnell keenly retorted, and they said more justly, the charge of incongruity upon Mr. Byng, who had declined offering himself as a candidate, till after he knew that Colonel Tufnell had got the promise of the Chiltern Hundreds.

Colonel Tufnell's situation, being Colonel of the eastern battalion of the Middlesex militia, had necessarily connected him with the Duke of Northumberland, the Lord Lieutenant of the county. He had been fortunate enough
to

to secure the friendship and esteem of that nobleman, who applied to the Minister for the Chiltern Hundreds in favor of Colonel Tufnell, or at least encouraged the Colonel to apply. This it was said he had done without knowing the choice of the freeholders. His interference in this matter was condemned as unconstitutional to the last degree. The Colonel, with the promise of the Minister in his pocket, attended a meeting of the freeholders, and, wishing them to believe he had vacated his seat, offered himself to their service. Without this he could not have been eligible. Even then it appeared that the majority were in favor of Mr. Byng, who by this time had asked the Minister also, and been refused on this stale pretence, that he had plighted his word to another. The Minister however had more places than one of this kind, why then, to shew his impartiality, did he not put Mr. Byng on a par with Colonel Tufnell? It was answered, For this plain reason, that he meant to give a member of his choosing to Middlesex. Here the unlawful use which the Premier makes of these unprofitable places was described in such colours, as at once disgusted the lover of equity, and called aloud for redress. It was said, and with peculiar beauty, that the Minister had erected an iron door of corruption to the House of Commons, and he alone

alone was possessed of the keys. How could the freeholders withhold their contempt, or curb their detestation, when they remembered, that the Minister had given, and withheld, the Chiltern Hundreds as his purposes required, on grounds so different. In the case of Colonel L—— he had given the vacating place for the express purpose of creating a contest ; in the case of Mr. Bailey he withheld it to prevent one. In Lord Hyde's case he gave it, because one more candidate added to two could not increase the contest ; and he gave it to Colonel Tufnell, because he was the first comer. In a word, Lord North's conduct was considered as an absolute insult to the respectable body of freeholders. What must be the conscience, or rather how unjust must be the measures of that Minister, who dreads the admission of men of independent principles into places of peculiar trust or honours ! When this debate happened, it was believed, that Colonel Tufnell had really vacated his seat for Beverly. What would not have been said against that gentleman and his friends, had it been then known, that he only held out the pretence ! The effects which the knowledge of this produced are universally known.

The gentlemen on the other side the question were hard put to it. It was difficult for them to defend a cause against the tide of popular opinion.

nion. They urged, however, that if Mr. Byng was the patriot he professed himself to be, why at this crisis create such disturbances, or so warmly contend for what might be called an alteration in form not in substance? Being already in Parliament, what opportunity did he want to exert his every faculty, and display his purest zeal for the good of his country? They thought disputing the matter so eagerly, led to infer that other objects might be in view. They dwelt upon the plea of honor, in the vindication of Lord North—considered its force in private life—that he who breaks his word forfeits his character, and why should its influence upon the conduct of a Minister be arraigned?—ought not its dictates with him to be if possible still more heard, and minutely attended to? They further urged the principles of the gentleman to whom he had given the promise, as being no mean exculpatory evidence for the integrity of the Premier. Colonel Tufnell had been steady in the minority, and it was ungenerous to suppose that either the readiness of Lord North in granting, or the friendship of the Lord Lieutenant of the county in aiding him, could seduce him from his party.

The question being put, it was carried against the Minister by a great majority.

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 1st, 1779.

Is an union with Ireland, somewhat similar to that with Scotland, to be wished; and, as things are now situated, would it be for the mutual interest of Great Britain and Ireland?

PERHAPS a question could not have been framed more apt to arouse the attention of the public than the foregoing. It was brought forward too, at a time when Irish affairs engrossed every conversation, from the most private round the ear of majesty itself, to the most public upon Change. In a nation like ours, what affects commerce in general, has a relation, less or more, to every member of the community. Till now, the mercantile affairs of that kingdom had never been properly examined, nor the leading interests thereof either wisely or politically arranged. Few people ever suffered more injuries than the Irish—none upon earth ever excelled them in loyalty. Patience, however, did not make them insensible: they felt the pressure of the yoke, without stretching forth their hand to remove it—they only in silence and sadness deplored its weight. They longed for redress, but prayed it might come
 7 from

from England. The restrictions under which they laboured had originated from that selfish illiberality, which often proves the attendant on commerce. Present evils impress more strongly, than either the past or the future. The attention of that people was drawn from the study of greater matters to guard against penury and famine. Oppression was brought home to the door of every individual, that anxiety for self-preservation might detach him from every other concern : for what other name can we give to the limitations of their manufacture—the withholding encouragements for agriculture—promoting emigration—increasing the number of absentees by the allurements of office and rewards in this country, by augmenting the pension list, and such-like acts? Galled in the tenderest parts by these, yet actuated by the most perfect loyalty, they approached the throne, with that earnestness which their distresses required, and humbly craved immediate and effectual redress. They received condolence, and flattered themselves it sprang from principle. Nothing however was done for them. They began to associate, and to learn the use of arms. The spirit was too universal to be checked—it affected the whole kingdom, and tended but to one center. Resolutions of non-importation became general throughout the country;

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and men who take the trouble to investigate the causes of events, and to look forward to their probable consequences, saw in this kindled spirit, and these operations, a kind of political analogy, which led them to draw similar conclusions, from beginnings so like to those in America. Nevertheless, so dilatory and lethargic in this instance, among others, were Administration, that while the storm was gathering thick around them, they were providing no shelter : but stood inactive spectators of the rising tumult, and neither strove to conciliate nor repress the rising spirit. Professions were again made, but no actions ensued. 'The fire which had circulated through every artery of the kingdom, now reached the heart ; and with a sudden and tremendous explosion burst into a lively flame. " A free trade to all the ports " was declared, by the unanimous voice of their Parliament, to be the only remedy that we should give, or that they would take.

How Administration would act, was not known when this question was agitated in the Westminster Forum.

The gentleman who opened the debate was averse to an union. Ireland being so far distant from the seat of government in this kingdom, he feared, would be an impediment to the able maintenance of its cause : partly owing to this circum-

circumstance, the real state of that kingdom might not be so well known, and the connections which the representatives might form with the people of this country, especially the Ministry, might be inimical thereto. Many things, he dreaded, would facilitate the corruption of its members, and then the most valuable concerns of the represented would be betrayed. An union was not their own desire. They demanded a free trade: and, were Administration cruel or foolish enough to push them to extremities, even then their condition would not be desperate! —The geographical advantages of the country spoke loud in its favor, Ireland having by far more convenient harbours, and more extensive out-lets for shipping, to, and from every quarter of the globe, than Great Britain. It was nearer to America, united to them by language and religion, nay, by natural relations, the emigrations from thence having been so great:—that were a dissolution ever to take place, which Heaven avert! between the kingdoms, the House of Bourbon would quickly perceive it to be their interest to yield them assistance. This speaker was also somewhat embarrassed about the granting a free trade: since, supposing the American trade restored, what merchant in his senses would bring that commodity from North America to the port of London, which he could

land in Ireland, being little more than half way ? and with less expence could export to any other part of the world. On this account, he thought the commerce of this country would be ruined by the compliance.

The second speaker took a view of the Scotch union, remarking, that it had chiefly been of advantage to England, since the emigrants from thence, no matter what the motives impelling them to leave the heath-covered mountains of Scotia, brought labour and perseverance along with them. They not only crowded the shops of the manufacturer and artificer, but filled our navy and army, with soldiers and sailors ; for enterprize and patience, inferior to none in the world. Whilst he wished every unwise restriction to be taken off, he could not help thinking, that Ireland seemed to crave the advantages without the disadvantages. If they obtained a free trade, he judged them bound both in equity and sound policy, to ease us of part of our national burden.

A gentleman, on the contrary, observed how much the union had been in favour of Scotland. Before that period their trade was nothing, compared to what it hath been since. He drew a miserable picture of the country ; and, to refute what had been urged about their being a kind of nursery for sailors and soldiers, he affirmed it proceeded

proceeded from the want of other means of subsistence, and that their swords had been mercenary, consequently not so much to be valued. He lamented the too great influence of Scotchmen in this country, and especially where it might be most dangerous, from its contiguity to the throne. They had crept into almost every place of honor, profit, or trust: from the appointing an ambassador, to the naming an exciseman: from the education of princes, to the meanest offices in the state, the interest of the Scotch extended.

A noble Lord, under the gallery, ably replied to these remarks, denied several of them as being not true, and contended, though Scotchmen had benefited by the union, the country had not. He accounted the spirit of liberty spread among her sons, to be the chief advantage which Scotland had derived from the union; and concluded his elegant and pathetic speech, with this, no less virtuous, than heroic sentiment—that he would rather be free in a desert, than a slave in a palace.

One ingenious member, the son of an eminent Irish patriot, rose to combat the question, and thought it improper in that society to discuss a matter of such importance, till after it had been before the British House of Commons, and their

opinions known : wherefore he moved to adjourn it till that day three months.

But when told from the chair, that the Westminster Forum was not at the nod of the Minister, and that though all who spoke and voted there had not the privilege of doing so in the Houses of Parliament, yet they might not in general be less qualified for either, of course, having the birthright of Britons, they would act up to it.

On hearing this, he dropped the motion—and was rather undetermined about the import of the question : he expatiated on the wretched condition of Ireland, and the miseries felt by her hapless sons. He extolled her gratitude to this country, and reprobated the idea of her entertaining the most distant thought of imitating America ; notwithstanding her diligence in acquiring the use of arms.

The next speaker, blending humour with argument, asked—Does a man voluntarily put himself to the trouble of sharpening a knife, unless he means to use it ? He testified no surprise at the notion of an union with Ireland, because it was not so novel as some former speakers had conceived. Those acquainted with history must know of the matter having been in agitation long ago, and if gentlemen would not read in private, they should not attempt to speak in public. He judged that an union would be
a saving

a saving to this country—dwelt jocosely upon the purchase of Mr. Flood, said to be at a very high rate—deplored the inability of this kingdom, at this period of our distress, to make many such purchases without risking a national bankruptcy. The Lord Lieutenant he considered likewise as a heavy burden, besides the majority necessary for the Crown to have in the Irish House of Commons, with many other incumbrances of an expensive nature, which by an union somewhat, though not altogether, like that with Scotland, would be removed, or vastly alleviated.

He was answered by a gentleman, who by more minutely entering into the argument, and discussing the above particulars in a more masterly manner, disrobed them of their first apparent consequence.

Thus stood the arguments when the hour of closing came. Here it was recollected, that the question had been brought on unexpectedly, being substituted for another, which had been advertised for that evening, but dismissed undebated: this, added to the importance of the subject, inclined the majority of the audience to adjourn it to

NOVEMBER 8th, 1779.

In the opinion of many conversant with the usual temper of such societies as the Westminster Forum, an adjourned question seldom yields a pleasing or instructive debate. Admitting this to be for the most part true, the above question in its adjourned state shewed, that where the matter has been interesting, the time granted for studying it hath not been lost.

An Alderman of the City of London, whose former speeches had both pleased and instructed the company, owned the pains he had been at in getting an exact estimate of the commerce of England and Scotland, previous to, and since the union. He favoured the Society with a short history of trade from the Revolution. He again described the natural disadvantages which Scotland laboured under, and from Custom-house books proved, that the trade of Scotland before the union scarce deserved to be mentioned. He contrasted the amount of our exports and imports in the year 1770, with what it had been in any former period, principally with a view of displaying the advantages of the union to Scotland; yet, notwithstanding all his precision, he was somewhat vague in his application of the matter to Ireland.

Others argued, that according to the maxims
of

of natural justice and good policy, we were bound to put them on a footing with ourselves. None denied but that in return they should pay a proportionate and reasonable part of our national expences.

By others, an attempt to unite the kingdoms was painted as destructive to both: that it would destroy mutual confidence, and, in the present temper of the Irish, might occasion very fatal consequences.

The debate was going on, when the attention of the Society was called to the gallery, where a very learned and able young gentleman began to speak, and indeed engrossed the whole of the remaining part of the evening. He was heard with great pleasure, and honoured with singular applause. Having since published the speech, we think it but justice to insert it, wishing that many other ingenious gentlemen, who delivered excellent speeches at the Forum, had followed his example. It would have much enriched this history.

" **MR. PRESIDENT,**

" **A STRANGER** in your country, and wholly unacquainted with your method of debate, I should not presume offering my sentiments, in this respectable assembly, on any other question, but that at present before you.

" **But,**

" But, Sir, an Irishman myself, glorying in my country, and jealous for her rights, and allied to this nation in allegiance and affection, I should think myself highly criminal, did I suffer a measure to pass *sub silentio*, which, if carried into execution, must bring inevitable ruin upon both kingdoms.

" Unacquainted with commerce, I shall not be able to follow the worthy Gentleman who has opened the debate, by pointing out the particular disadvantages that would accrue to the trade of Ireland, more than to that of Scotland, by an union, but I shall take up the question in a constitutional light, and deliver my opinion at large upon the subject.

" Having, Sir, nothing but the welfare of my country at heart, I cannot wish to deceive, and if, Sir, the ideas I have formed, respecting an union, are wrong, Gentlemen will be able to convince me of their defects; and I trust, the virtue of my intention will excuse my error of judgment.

" I look upon an union, Sir, between Great Britain and Ireland, as highly injurious to the latter kingdom—Because, Ireland can never be constitutionally represented in an English Parliament;

" Because, it must destroy her dignity as a nation; and,

" Because,

" Because, Sir, such a measure can never be the desire of any Minister who does not wish to enslave that kingdom.

" I look, Sir, upon an union between Great Britain and Ireland, as injurious to Great Britain, because it would nerve the arm of the Minister, and enable him to enslave this country also.—And

" I look upon an union between Great Britain and Ireland extremely injurious, at this particular crisis, to both kingdoms, because it might alarm your fellow-subjects in Hibernia, it might rouse them to rebellion, and plunge the sword of war, once more into a brother's breast.

" First, Sir, Ireland can never be constitutionally represented in an English Parliament.

" Many are the disadvantages which must arise from such a representation.

" The representatives, Sir, so far removed from their constituents, constantly residing here, marrying and settling among English families, would, in a great measure, lose their affection for their native land; while the constituents themselves, so distant from the Senate, would fail in their spirit, would grow careless of that liberty, which they would find it impossible to protect, and would in a little time dwindle into an abject state of slavery.

" As

“ As the Parliament at present stands, the constituents have a frequent opportunity of advising with their Members, for the national benefit; and though, Sir, I entirely agree with Sir William Blackstone, that a representative in Parliament is not bound to obey the advice of his constituents, yet, sure it must have great weight with any unprejudiced man, in removing such doubts as may arise, and directing his judgment in matters which of himself he could not rightly understand—but this advantage, should an union take place, must fall to the ground; the distance between the representative and the represented, would almost render it impossible for them to consult together. Thus, matters, destructive to Ireland, might be carried by surprise; while others, of the greatest advantage, might be postponed, until the delay should render them of no effect.

“ Besides, Sir, to become an Irish representative, in an English Parliament, must be attended with heavy expence; and Gentlemen, who spend a great deal of money to obtain a seat in that assembly, are often willing to reimburse themselves by some lucrative place, or ponderous pension, thereby binding themselves to support every measure of an Administration, however corrupt, and bartering the privileges of the people for gold—for ill-acquired gold.

“ Besides, Sir, another manifest disadvantage which would arise from the Irish Parliament being holden in England, is, that practitioners of the Law must be utterly excluded, as it would be impossible for them to attend their duty at Westminster, and the Courts in Dublin; and they must either drop their profession, thereby injuring the kingdom, by depriving it of their abilities to defend its rights and properties, or leave the Parliament in pretty much a similar situation as that assembled in the 6th of Henry IV, which, because no Lawyers were admitted, received the ignominious title of *Parliamentum indoctum*, a name by which it has ever since been distinguished.

“ Ireland, Sir, to be constitutionally free, ought to be duly and potently represented.

“ It ought, Sir, to be duly represented; estated Gentlemen should be chosen by the different counties, in order to watch over, and protect the landed property of the kingdom; and Citizens and Merchants by the cities and trading towns, to regulate and preserve the commerce of the nation.

“ Now, Sir, is it to be supposed, that Merchants, and men in business, will be induced, for the sake of sitting in the English Parliament, where they can have but little weight, to desert their own kingdom, to leave the management
of

of their affairs to clerks, who often take advantage of their masters absence to enrich themselves by plunder? and thus, for the vain desire of an insignificant Ay, or fruitless No, leave their homes, their families, and their business, to find perhaps on their return their substance embezzled, and a commission of bankruptcy awarded against them?

“ If Merchants, Sir, and Traders, are by any means prevented from their seats in the Senate, that kingdom can never be duly, consequently must be unconstitutionally represented.

“ From hence, Sir, it must appear evident to every impartial man, should an union take place, Ireland must be deprived of two of the most useful classes of her representatives, her Traders, and her Lawyers, the great bulwarks of her liberty.

“ The necessity of Traders in Parliament, Sir, was so evident to our ancestors, that tenants in burgh, or merchant towns, were, after being indulged with many privileges, at length admitted into the great council of the nation; and with respect to the Lawyers, I shall only add, Sir, that to know our constitution is to admire it; and men who have been obliged by necessity, as well as prompted by inclination, to examine into its foundation and regular progress, must naturally be urged to protect what it is impossible for them not to regard; and, hence it is, Sir, that Lawyers (some few excepted, who have

have been led away by the dazzling splendor of court employment) have ever been the most steadfast advocates for the preservation of liberty and the glory of the constitution.

" But, Sir, Ireland to be free, must not only be duly, but potently represented.

" Unless, Sir, the representatives have a power to reject any measure, which they may deem injurious to their country, the very design of their election is frustrated, and consequently the kingdom cannot have a constitutional Parliament.

" Now, Sir, it is by no means to be supposed, that Ireland could be so fully represented as at present; the number of her Lords of Parliament, and of her Commons, would be considerably diminished; so that it would never be a difficult matter for the Minister to procure a majority of the English and Scotch in both houses, to over-rule the Irish; let me suppose then, that a matter relative to Ireland was to be introduced, and every Irish Peer, and every Irish Commoner, to object thereto, would it not be possible to carry it in their defiance? Certainly it would: thus, then, their representation becomes a matter of mere form, and the honest Hibernians are reduced to the miserable necessity of becoming slaves, even while they wear the mask of liberty. How gloomy! how dreadful the idea!

" A majority of alien members may impose what taxes they please on that unhappy land, and the truly noble maxim of Edward the first, *Quæ ad omnes pertinent ab omnibus debent tractari*—must be buried in oblivion, together with the liberties of the people of Ireland.

" Now, Sir, if contrary to the will of a majority of Irish Peers, and Irish Commoners, Ireland may be taxed by a superior majority of English and Scotch Nobles, and Commoners, Ireland can never be said to be potently represented, that is, represented in such a manner as to be able to reject what the representatives of that kingdom in their wisdom shall think improper: Even though no such case was ever to happen, where the Irish party should be overruled, yet, Sir, the possibility exists, and while the possibility exists, the Parliament is unconstitutional.

" Mr. Locke says, Sir, that a man who is shut up in a room, ignorant of his confinement, and no way desirous to depart, is not at liberty; because, had he the inclination, he is deprived of the power. So, Sir, I think we may conclude, that where there is a possibility, were the representatives of Ireland desirous to reject a measure, that that very measure might be carried in their defiance, those representatives have not the power to reject, consequently the parliament can not be constitutional.

" Now

" Now, Sir, Ireland to be free, must be constitutionally represented.

" Ireland by an union can not be constitutionally represented ;

" Consequently, by an union Ireland can not be free ;

" And if not free, she must become the seat of slaves, dependent upon British ministers and British councils for support—I shudder at the idea !

" Sir, Gentlemen compare an union between Great-Britain and Ireland to the union with Scotland ; and they seem to think, what was so much for the benefit of the one, cannot be injurious to the interests of the other.

" I grant, Sir, a similarity of causes will produce a similar effect ; but, Sir, the least diversity ought to be carefully examined.

" Now, Sir, I shall beg leave to mention the reasons laid down by a northern writer, why the union was advantageous to Scotland, in order to shew, that in the present case they cannot exist.

" In Scotland," says he, " we had little or no commerce"—please to observe, little or no commerce ; " the land property was engrossed by the nobility, and it continued to remain so as long as we had Parliaments ; the same cause which raised the Commons in England, in Scotland depressed them ; beside, the Lords and

Commons sat in one house, and the nation, carried away by the splendor of the former, lost sight of their own representatives, while the representatives themselves, imposed on by the same splendor, lost the idea of their own importance. The Commons could set up no distinctions of rights and privileges in a single body; of which they only made a part; and not favoured by the people, they would not favour the people in return; the number of Scotch electors was insignificant, scarcely amounting to three thousand voters, and the constitution of Scotland, till incorporated with that of England, was a mixture of monarchy and oligarchy, the nation consisting of an oligarchy, without the privilege of electing their own representatives; of a Gentry, indeed, intitled to represent by election, but unable to serve the nation; and of a Nobility which oppressed one, and despised both; but now," he concludes, "the union with England has given other rights to our part of the Legislature, has settled us upon that just poise, which has rendered the constitution of England the wonder of mankind."

"Such are the words of Mr. Dalrymple; who, in his excellent treatise on tenures, demonstrates his knowledge not only of the immediate state of that kingdom, but also of its primitive existence and gradual progress.

"Let

" Let us now, Sir, make a comparison between the state of the two kingdoms, Scotland and Ireland, and see if the same reasons which rendered an union with Great-Britain advantageous to the former, hold equal sway with respect to the latter.

" In Scotland, Sir, there was little or no commerce ; Ireland is a place of trade : in Scotland the land property was engrossed by the Nobles ; in Ireland it is divided among the Gentry : in Scotland the Peers and Commons sat together , in Ireland they have separate houses and separate privileges : in Scotland there were but three thousand voters , in Ireland the electors for the county and city of Dublin alone exceed that number. Thus, then, while Scotland was a mixture of monarchy and oligarchy, Ireland is an happy junction of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy ; from whence, as from different springs running through distinct and regular courses, the streams of freedom flow, till they unite at length in the one common flood of constitutional liberty.

" From hence it is plain, Sir, that Scotland by an union became better represented ; that Ireland by the same measure would be considerably worse.

" Let us now consider, Sir, whether an union would not injure Ireland with respect to its dignity as a nation.

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" Having

" Having already seen, Sir, that it is improbable the trader would, and impossible the practising lawyer could, become a representative in Parliament, that office must necessarily be filled by gentlemen of large estates, who, as soon as elected, consign the care of those estates perhaps to avaricious agents, who harraßs the poor, but industrious tenant, by exorbitant rents, while they bestow leases at an insignificant price to their own needy followers, to the flagrant oppression of many worthy and reputable farmers, and to the manifest degradation of their masters honour.

" Besides, Sir, what a drain of cash must the kingdom by this means suffer! and gentlemen possessed of large estates, spending their whole income in another country, has been deemed so great a hardship, that the Legislature of Ireland has more than once had in contemplation to relieve it by a tax on the absentee.

" Here, Sir, is an evil, an acknowledged evil, which instead of attempting to restrain, must be considerably augmented, for sure it would be equally absurd and ungrateful, to send Gentlemen out of their country about the business of the nation, and then to tax them for their absence.

" Besides, Sir, the Nobles and estated Gentlemen departed, Genius would clap her wings and fly
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from the deserted land : not only men of fortune, Sir, but men who rely upon their abilities to acquire a fortune, would desert Hibernia, as a place not calculated for their pursuits. Fond of basking in the sun-shine of power, and deriving animal heat from their vicinity to a court, they would haste to England, and hapless Ireland, once universally admired for the eloquence of her orators,—the wisdom of her divines,—the ability of her lawyers—and the bravery of her warriors,—would become at best the counting-house of the merchant, and the shop of the mechanic.

“ I know it may be said, Sir, that while Ireland consists of merchants and mechanics, she must have wealth ; and while she has wealth she will have no reason to complain ; and I acknowledge indeed, Sir, that such men are of the greatest utility ; but though I allow, Sir, the work of the carpenter gives stability to the mansion, I cannot but admire the elegant taste of the sculptor, which renders beautifully ornamental what the former had calculated for use.

“ Arts and sciences, Sir, are both necessary to support the dignity of a nation ; and of the latter, Ireland, when robbed of her Parliament, can never be possessed.

“ But, Sir, no Minister can wish for an union but with a determined resolution to enslave Ireland,

land, to destroy her constitution, by injuring the parts, to ruin the symmetry, and in the end to overturn the whole.

" Sir, there are but two causes which could ever make an honest Minister desire an union : first, Sir, least Ireland, having a Parliament of her own, should take advantage of her distance from this country, and pass, by surprize, laws similar to those in the reign of Henry VI, dangerous to the British Government : and the second, Sir, if the Parliament of Ireland was obstinate and refractory, thwarting the will of the Minister, and refusing the necessary supply.

" Now, Sir, do either of these causes at present exist ?

" With respect to the former, Sir, it is amply provided against by the law called Poynings, which forbids the assembling of Parliament, except convened by the King's commandment and licence, and which further provides, that no law can be enacted in that kingdom, but such as receives the sanction of his Majesty and Privy Council of Great Britain. Thus then, Sir, it must be clear, that no measure can be adopted by surprize, and no Bill passed but with the consent of the Minister.

" And now, Sir, to prove that an English Minister has every reason to rely on the generosity of Irish Parliaments, let us look back to the

the conduct of those held under some of the late Governors.

" In a time of profound peace, Sir, when all was hush as nature self had slept, and the heart-rejoicing olive bloomed and flourished in those happy isles, under the administration of Lord Townshend, and at the desire of Government, the Irish Parliament resolved, that twelve thousand men were absolutely necessary for the defence of that kingdom; and upon the Royal promise that that number of men should be always in actual service in Ireland, except in cases of invasion or rebellion in Great Britain, they agreed to an augmentation of the army.

" The next Parliament, Sir, under the administration of the late Lord Harcourt, upon a message from his Majesty, and a motion made by a Right Honourable Baronet, now a Peer of the realm, seconded by Mr. Helen, now one of the Judges of the Common Pleas, agreed to lend the Minister four thousand of our troops. Such, Sir, was their acquiescence to the desires of Government, that in a time of danger, when American privateers had watered in our ports, and were cruising in our channel, the Parliament of Ireland judged eight thousand men sufficient to protect what, in a time of perfect tranquillity, twelve thousand were declared necessary to defend.

“ The same Parliament, Sir, obliged Lord Harcourt by the Stamp Act; a law the most grievous and unpatriotic that ever the Irish Legislature agreed to.

“ So much for the two last Parliaments; now, Sir, let us see the complexion of the present one,

“ As soon, Sir, as the French Ambassador had delivered his rescript to Lord Weymouth, Mr. Daly anticipated the wishes of the Minister: that Gentleman, Sir, adored for his noble and independent principles, and one of the leaders of the Opposition, as it is vulgarly termed, moved an address to his Majesty, full of the most affectionate professions, and offering every assistance possible to support the honour and dignity of the House of Hanover upon the British Throne.

“ This address, Sir, not proposed by the creature of the Minister, or the official servant of the Crown, but by a Gentleman, whose character was without blemish, and on whose integrity his country might depend, I say, Sir, this address, was unanimously carried in the Commons, and sent up to the Lords for their concurrence, the zeal, Sir, of that Right Honourable House was so great, that Lord Mount Morris and Lord Carisford disputed who should move the Peers to agree therein, the motion,
Sir,

Sir, was made by Lord Mount Morres, and carried without a dissentient voice.

“ They shewed their affection not by words alone; words may deceive, Sir, but actions never can, and that very session they voted Government an additional loan of three hundred thousand pounds; if, Sir, that loan was not filled, it only shews that the loyalty of the Irish out-ran their ability, and you must lament that your impolitic restrictions on our trade prevented us from bestowing the assistance we were so willing to afford.

“ Is this then a Parliament you would annihilate?

“ Is it for such conduct you would utterly destroy it? Does not sound policy negative the thought? Is not true gratitude shocked at the idea?

“ When, Sir, an English Minister shall desire an union, a land-tax, or other hydra-headed evil, must be in contemplation, too black to hope for success by any other method than that of uniting a few Irish Members amongst a majority of men, strangers to the country, ignorant of her interests, devoted to the measures of Government, and regardless who are taxed so the burthen does not fall on their own immediate constituents: when Ireland is thus compelled to vote away her liberties and property
by

by alien Members, her harp will be untuned, and discord be the sound at every touch.

“ And now, Sir, let us consider whether it would not be injurious to Great Britain; whether it would not nerve the arm of the Minister, and enable him to enslave this country also.

“ The great foundation of British liberty, Sir, is that dependence which the Minister must have for support on the generosity of the people; when he becomes obnoxious to them, when once he adopts measures contrary to their desires, they refuse him supplies, and consequently compel him to act agreeable to their directions. If once then a rapacious tool gets the ascendancy over you, if by any means he is enabled to secure a majority in Parliament, your liberty—your boasted liberty, is then no more.

“ When I say, Sir, if he is able to secure a majority, I wish to be understood. The power of the Minister to bestow places and pensions, may obtain him a majority in a few sessions; but remember, that at a general election you have always power to return independent men, if you return others, you, and you only, are to blame.

“ Should an union take place, let us see, Sir, what may be the event: you will become liable
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to be taxed by alien Members ; that is, Sir, by Members whom you do not return, in whose election you have no interest, and over whom you cannot have any influence ; your representation will be unconstitutional, and consequently your liberty as Britons will no longer exist.

“ There are at present, Sir, many Scotch Members in your Parliament, join Irish to those, and tremble at the event ; the former, Sir, I have proved, had never any liberty.——I am sorry, Sir, I have given offence,——I meant none,——I came to a society of free debate, and thought I should be indulged with freedom of speech. I hope, Sir, no man will imagine me capable of national reflections ; there are many Gentlemen of Scotland whom I sincerely esteem, but, Sir, what I said, I now assert from the authority of one of their own writers, it appears their Parliament was not constitutionally free, and surely Gentlemen will allow, that a man can never estimate, at its real value, a jewel, of which he was never possessed.

“ I say, Sir, suppose the Scotch Members, who in their present feeble representation, enjoy liberties till now unknown, and suppose Irishmen, who being once possessed of constitutional liberty, could meanly relinquish it, and will you suppose such persons proper guardians for your rights and privileges ? Surely no, if they

they relinquish their own prerogative, they never will be preservers of yours ; join these, I say, with such British Members as avarice may secure, or ambition delude, and say, if your liberties are then secure ; then, Sir, and speedily then, will the prophecy of the learned Montesquieu be fulfilled, who has declared, that England in the course of things must lose her liberty ; and when she does, she will be a greater slave than any of her neighbours.

“ But, Sir, was an union to be desired, was it a measure beneficial to both kingdoms, yet, Sir, at this particular crisis, it must be injurious to both ; because it might tend to create suspicions in the breasts of the Irish, might rouse them to rebellion, and plunge the sword of war once more into a brother's breast. [*Here the President acquainted the Speaker, that the time limited by the rules of the Society for a gentleman to speak was fifteen minutes, and that he had indulged him with near an hour ; notwithstanding a cry of “ Go on” almost universal, the Speaker paid obedience to the dictates of the chair, and sat down. The following sentences are what he meant to have added.*]

“ Innovations in Government are always hazardous, and often attended with the most fatal effects ; the struggles of the people to establish a republic raised a civil war, and stained

stained the scaffold even with Royal Blood; while, on the other hand, an attempt of arbitrary power lost the unfortunate James and his family the Crown of England.

“ But I need not go so far back into history : it was the attempt to innovate the Government of the Colonies that hath let slaughter loose in America, and hath “ frightened the British isle from her propriety.”

“ If ever the attempt is to be made, it should be when we have peace abroad and harmony at home.

“ But, Britons, as you regard your own liberties, be tender of ours ; and as you value your own happy constitution, infringe not ours ; but, inspired with true and patriotic fire, join with me while in the fullness of my heart, and in the words of a celebrated writer, I exclaim, *Esto perpetua*—Be it evermore.”

Whilst he spoke, many Gentlemen discerned that it was studied. He was, contrary to the laws of the Society, indulged with near an hour. Had it been known he was within a few sentences of the conclusion, none would have more gladly heard him finish than the President. After all, by way of reply to the parenthesis he has subjoined towards the close of his printed speech ; beg leave to remind him, that it was the

the sense of the majority he should be stopped, for every body knows, that without this, the President would venture to interrupt, or silence no speaker.

The question being put, It was carried in favour of a Free Trade, against an Union.

NOVEM-

N O V E M B E R 15th, 1779.

Whether the Administration, in abandoning the island of Jamaica, have not in so far abdicated the Government of Britain, and acknowledged their incapacity of holding the reins ?

WHEN this question was offered to the Society for their acceptance, it was almost unanimously voted : when the evening of debate arrived, and time had been taken to weigh the terms of the proposition, scarce any imagined it could bear argumentation, and one Gentleman in particular arraigned the good sense of the proposer, from the very words in which it was expressed.

Another Gentleman, exclaiming against the falseness of it, moved that it might be dismissed, not dreaming that it would be owned and warmly supported.

Hereupon the President assured the first objector, that the question stood in his book, and had been advertised in the news-papers in the express terms in which he had received it — nay, the question in the hand-writing of the author was still by him, who was a Gentleman

of approved abilities and great elocution, whom he hoped to see rise and vindicate his own.

This had the desired effect. He rose, and confessed the question might probably have been rather better expressed if more maturely weighed; but could by no means agree with the Gentleman who moved for the dismissal of it. He began by deploring our inferiority in the West Indies, which had formed a considerable part of national disgrace. With a fleet of 21 ships of the line and a frigate, reduced with foulness, and badly equipped with stores, Admiral Byron was opposed to the Count D'Estaing with 34 clean and well-provided ships. He kept him for a length of time closely blocked up in Martinique; but while he was conveying the homeward-bound trade thro' the islands, the Count escaped, and instantly reduced the islands of St. Vincent and Grenada. Mr. Byron, it is true, may be said to have brought him to action, but found him so superior both in number and cleanness, that he could neither equal him in manœuvres, nor force him to close engagement. There was no apparent want of spirit in the officers or men, but there was an impotence and inability in the ships, which tarnished the honour of the flag. It might be proved, that the want of success did not so much arise from the inequality in point

point of number as condition ; and this he attributed entirely to the admiralty-board of this country. Not singly however to the naval line were our calamities confined. A want of reinforcements has involved the islands in danger and despair. This led him to reflect on the conduct of the Premier, who declared in the House of Commons, " That it was impossible at all times to preserve the outskirts of the wide-extended empire of Britain, as the body must be maintained before the limbs." On the declaration of hostilities from Spain, the same person asserted, that without thirty thousand additional troops he could not detach any reinforcements for the preservation of the West India islands, nor think the internal safety of Britain even secure. He wished to double the militia, that this number might be raised. This scheme was dropped from the opposition it met in the House of Lords, and that of voluntary aids substituted, where the partiality of the Minister defeated the intended utility. The thirty thousand men were not raised. Grenada and St. Vincent's now belonged to the French, and the misfortune augmented by what this animated speaker called the positive abdication, on the part of Government, of the whole, deduced from the answer given by the Minister to the merchants and proprietors of the Leeward Islands, when they

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petitioned for assistance, namely—"that Government could not defend them—they must necessarily protect and maintain themselves." After this, he asked, could any doubt their incapacity for holding the reins?

It was advanced, in opposition to these doctrines, that the terms of the question were not fact. Administration, they said, had not abandoned the island of Jamaica, witness the 10,000 troops now on the spot in arms for its defence, as well as the quantities of all requisite stores that but a few days before were shipped from Deptford and Woolwich for their use; there being no express testimony of the Ministry having abandoned the island, it was unfair to infer it from silence. The first part of the question therefore not being proved, arguing about their incapacity was both unjust and absurd. The declamation about our naval affairs was rather conjecture than argument, and when dissected, proved more like the ebullition of rancor, than the effects of sober reasoning. The story was but half told, consequently misrepresented, and the unforeseen accidents which occasioned the circumstances, the gentleman had so depicted, as conspired to fix the blame just where the speaker meant it should rest.

Some other gentlemen pursued the track of the opener of the debate, and insisted that allegiance

legiance implied protection, if this was denied, that was dissolved. It is, said they, the Administration that is incapable, and not the kingdom that is weak. If the Leeward Islands are lost to the Crown, it is because protection was withdrawn, when protection might have been given. But Administration have not been able to protect the dominions of the Crown: our distant possessions have been reduced, and our domestic insulted; and when imminent danger follows on the heels of loss, they inform their diminishing country that they cannot protect the outskirts. Did ever an illustrious Pitt hold such language? No!—with far less expenditure both of men and money, he not only preserved all, but added to our possessions, and made the bird of conquest perch upon the British standard, in every quarter of the globe. Whereas the present Administration, as if ignorant of the importance of Jamaica to this country, had with all the insensibility of Stoics, resigned it to its fate. Having lost America, they seemed resolved to sport with the remainder. As to the 10,000 men in arms upon the island, a great part of them were negroes, in whom no confidence could be placed, and who, as had happened in similar cases, witness at Senegal and Senegambia, would probably in the hour of danger turn their force against their masters. Did not these

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circumstances collected, amount to an acknowledgment of their incapacity for holding the reins?

Their respondents affirmed this was begging the question. They kept the ground they had first taken, and contended the question was not true. They had demanded proofs, after all, had received nothing but assertions, or improbable inferences drawn from disputed premises.

The question being put—It was carried against Administration.

NOVEMBER

N O V E M B E R 22d, 1779.

Whether the Livery of the city of London ought, or ought not, to reward Mr. Wilkes's conduct, as a Magistrate and Member of Parliament, with the lucrative office of Chamberlain?

THIS question had been given in the preceding evening, and received so unanimously, as encouraged the proposer, who sat just by the President's chair, to hand up another note, intimating, that the favourable admission of the question, had prompted him to beg that it might be debated next Monday; which being granted, it was brought forward on the evening of that day whereon Mr. Wilkes began to poll for the Chamberlainship, vacant by the death of the late Benjamin Hopkins, Esq. It produced a debate, similar to what might be expected from so popular a topic.

In matters where the populace direct, and where their humour runs high; it is a nice and critical task to oppose them. Art must become the handmaid of judgment and experience; in trying to turn the tide with the least probability of success. Declaimers and upstarts, who full of ambition, without the least grain of moral rectitude, having little or nothing to lose, are indifferent about what may chance to happen,

for the most part, rant away on the popular side, finding it easier to mislead the passions, than to bias the judgment: while those of deeper reflection, and better skilled in the operations of the human mind, look closer at objects—ponder their separate relations, and are enabled thereby to determine more wisely. But where neither the love of our country, nor private concerns, are essentially affected, those, the best qualified, will not always take the trouble to unveil the various masques of hypocrisy, or to counteract the subtle workings of mock patriotism.

The Chamberlainship of the city of London, is both an honourable and important office. Had it not been both, there is reason to believe Mr. Wilkes would never have aimed at it. Upon this occasion it was truly pleasant to mark the diversity of characters, and the sudden transition from principles, formerly avowed. The time had but lately been, when the majority of the Livery of London thought Mr. Wilkes, an improper person for this office. His private life was considered as an insuperable objection—nay flaws in his public conduct were pointed out—his disrespect on the day of the very last general election, shewn to the freeholders of Middlesex, with several other matters of a similar nature. Whereas now some of those very people,

ple, were the loudest in his praise, and the most eager to support him. Nothing was heard of relative to him, save what he had suffered in the public service—to mention his private vices was deemed ungenerous, and if any one still ventured to judge him an improper person, he was supposed to be prejudiced, and under the influence, either of the Ministry, or of a weak and narrow spirit.

A numerous company attended, and the only doubt, which the real friends of the Forum entertained, was, least the debate should prove insipid, from there being none hardy enough to oppose so popular a hero. This partly took place, for only two speakers were against him.

The first of whom arranged his sentiments under three heads, 1st, The Livery ought not to chuse him; 2dly, Mr. Wilkes ought not to solicit it; and 3dly, To describe what kind of a man the Livery ought to chuse. The first, he endeavoured to enforce from a sense of the insults he had offered to his fellow citizens. He specified several instances of disrespect shewn to them, and imagined there were also some, where their interests had yielded to his own private maxims of policy, or prospect of emolument. 2dly, That he ought not to solicit it, he simply inferred from Mr. Wilkes having many

years past, told the Livery that he would never aim at the Chamberlainship.

Here the audience grew impatient of the weak manner in which this Gentleman argued, and testified the strongest disapprobation, calling out, Down, down, &c. The President interfered, and begged the exertion of their usual impartiality—that he craved their indulgence for him, because, however now weakened by the infirmities of age, with perhaps other pressures, he had for many years held the chair in a Society, once a seat of humour and instruction, and was a person whom probably several Gentlemen present, had formerly with respect addressed.

This speaker was then encouraged to go on to his third article, namely, to describe what kind of a man the Livery should chuse. Here he observed, that as he was to be from the nature of his office the judge and monitor of youth, he ought to believe Christianity, which, it was at least doubtful, if Mr. Wilkes did. That he ought to be a good moral man—a church-going man—faithful to his own engagements, and just in his transactions with others: the very contrary of all which, was notoriously known to be the character of John Wilkes, Esq. But he was the idol of the mob—the favourite at present of the Livery, who, if they had it in their power, would even make a bishop of him.

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The other Gentleman on the same side of the question, argued with more sublety, and far greater ingenuity. In order to divert the attention of the audience from the unpopularity of his argument, he declared himself the friend of Mr. Wilkes: that he from his heart sincerely wished him success; but having been in company with several Gentlemen just before he came into the Society, where defending the propriety of the choice of the Livery, he was warmly opposed; and begged leave to narrate what had passed. He had urged in favour of Mr. Wilkes, his removing the more than Egyptian yoke of general warrants—it was answered—he never reprobated these, till they came home to himself. He urged his merit, in exposing the artifices of a Scotch Administration, with the inglorious peace they had made, in his political papers the North Briton. It was answered—these had never been wrote, if Lord Bute had not refused him the government of Canada. The resistance the patriot had made to the authority of both houses of Parliament, was construed in a similar manner, with this additional reflection, that he had contributed by his speeches and writings to the rebellion in America—that he was fraudulent in his dealings—a man of no property, and of such morals, as were a disgrace to human nature, wherefore totally disqualified, for the important office,

office, of Chamberlain of the first, if not the greatest, city in the world. These were a few of the many objections offered; and, confessing he had been unable to refute them, humbly hoped some of that Gentleman's friends, would now embrace the opportunity of solving to his hand.

The Gentleman who spoke first in favour of Mr. Wilkes, had been at great pains to prepare himself for the debate. Having a slight acquaintance with that gentleman, he made free to use it by calling upon him, and having received from himself, whatever anecdotes, or information relative to his connections and public services, Mr. Wilkes thought proper to communicate. Notwithstanding all which, he was by no means the most able or ingenious advocate which Mr. Wilkes had in the debate. He depicted, or rather tried to do it, the early part of the Candidate's life. Being a Gentleman of opulent fortune, of great abilities and humour, he was courted by the first company; many of his intimate associates then, were now in the highest departments of state. By way of illustrating the splendor of his early circumstances, he meant to alleviate the vice of prodigality, wherewith he had been so forcibly charged. The Livery, moreover, ought to chuse him on principles of sound policy, since it was universally known, that he had shewn himself superior to corruption;

tion, and his inflexible opposition to Administration, became a pledge, that the influence resulting from the office he now solicited, would never be used for venal purposes. He affirmed the Livery were equally bound to give this office to him, from principles of generosity and gratitude. Here he pompously, though far from elegantly, recounted the services of Mr. Wilkes, dwelt on what he had suffered for them—and trusted, the Livery would not hesitate to reward them.

He was followed by a Gentleman not more distinguished for his wit than his argument, who never fails to please, by the light wherein he places the question—by the curious anecdotes he inserts—the stories he tells—the allusions he makes, or the general laugh which he creates. He replied to a qualification mentioned by the first speaker, namely, that the holder of the office ought to believe Christianity. He did not precisely know what the Gentleman meant by Christianity, though he would assert, if the city of London wanted a Chamberlain, till they found a man who really, and actually believed all the 39 articles of the Church of England, he dreaded they might want one for ever. But how can any one doubt Mr. Wilkes being a good moral man? Don't we all reckon priestcraft contrary thereto! then I am sure no man, either

to publicly

publicly or privately, hath laboured more strenuously, to root up the very foundation of all kinds of priestcraft from the earth, than he hath done. Let me turn now, continued he, to the worthy Gentleman who hath favoured us with a curious dialogue between him and himself. In the case of Dr. Shebbeare, it hath been asked, Why did not Mr. Wilkes condemn, what he afterwards so strongly reprobated? Besides the frivolous nature of the question, without specifying the multiplicity of reasons which might be assigned, suffice it to say, there is no conviction like home conviction. The article about the Printers, was such as Mr. Wilkes could with propriety do nothing in—humorously retorted the charge against him, for squandering away his own estate—and after a multitude of encomiums on his merits, recommended him to the Livery, as a proper person to serve the office of Chamberlain.

A member of the court of Aldermen, after ranging over the same field, informed the Society, that this being the only great city office, for which they have a right to demand security, in this contest, a far greater sum, upon the most unquestionable credit, had been offered in behalf of Mr. Wilkes, than was ever known to have been offered before; consequently the objection about the safety of the public cash, drawn from

his having been an imprudent manager of his own, fell to the ground. Justice he also apprehended to be concerned in securing his election, seeing he promised to set five hundred pounds a year apart for the payment of his creditors, in imitation of the late Sir Theodore Janssen of worthy memory,

The Gentleman who spoke next, with unusual rapidity of elocution, gave scope to fancy, and beautified every service of Mr. Wilkes, extolled his public virtue to the stars, and went so far in the defence of his religion, that even were he made a bishop, he would cut as good a figure as any upon the bench: for if a good textuary be a good divine, those honoured with the acquaintance of that Gentleman well knew, that few men were ever readier in the quoting texts from scripture, or more particular in the application of them.

The question being put—It was almost unanimously carried in favour of Mr. Wilkes.

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 29th, 1779.

Is Government in honour bound to support American Refugees?

THIS question was given in by one of the most warm and zealous advocates for America, who for years past had regularly frequented Societies of this kind, such as the Robin-Hood—Coach-Makers Hall, &c. where, if his speaking did not always please others, it at least never tired himself. He warps every question with his own views, and all his arguments are blended with American politics. He fancies he stands on delicate ground, and imagines the Ministry keep a watchful eye over his conduct. The Gentleman's apprehensions, however, by all those who really know him, are concluded to be far superior to his dangers, if not perfectly groundless.

The opening of the debate fell not to his share, but to one, who, lost in the croud, was heard before he was seen, crying, that like little Moses among the bulrushes, he could only attract by his voice. The uncommon introduction soon gained attention, and being speedily elevated

elevated to a conspicuous station, he thus addressed us.

Government cannot support them, except from the civil list—from the private purses of the Ministry—or with the money of the public. Admitting the benevolence of the Sovereign to be most unlimited; it was nevertheless impossible for him to do it; since, considering his numerous family, with the requisites to support the dignity of the Crown, he himself, not long ago, had been obliged to ask for an augmentation to his income: as for the Ministry, their inherent virtue, and *Amor Patriæ*, had kept them so poor, that they could scarce pay above three or four mistresses at one time, and their tradesmen in this case could not in common justice expect to be paid. They bade us judge of their inability, both from their own complaints; and also from the very modest hints of having got nothing, which the one threw out in behalf of the other. Pure benevolent souls, they would cheerfully support them if they could afford it! it were full as wise to expect figs from thorns, as charity from them. Their support then must come from the public treasury, with which no doubt they made pretty free: thus resembling the pious thief, who stole the goose, and afterwards gave the giblets away in Christian charity. The money was not theirs—they were accountable
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for it—it was unconstitutional, yea, nefarious and unjust, for them to sport with it.

Not was the iniquity lessened by the character of the objects of it. Allowing them to be distressed, were those from whom it was exacted less so? Did not they groan under enormous taxes? Were not the huts of agriculture forsaken—the villages of active industry desolated—and manufacture of every kind decreased?—were not the children asking for bread, and there was none to give them? Granting the old proverb, "Charity begins at home," is ofteneft used by the narrow and selfish mind, still it held true, that our own misfortunes had a claim for relief, prior to those of others. Supporting the American Refugees, verified the expression of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Their character likewise might be good, though it had been strongly impeached; after all, if they did dirty work, like other scavengers, they should be paid for it.

Another judicious Gentleman remarked, that in all political contests, success alone denominated the value. Had the Norman failed, the historic page would have branded the invasion with every opprobrious term: he was fortunate, and got the appellation of Conqueror. Had not the Prince of Orange gained his ends, his attempt would probably have been called unjust and unnatural; seeing he meant to dethrone his father-

father-in-law: but he succeeded, and what he effected, is universally called, the glorious revolution. As to America, should Britain finally prevail, the present attempt will be deemed an unnatural rebellion; whereas if the scale of America preponderates, it will by posterity be stamped with the most illustrious names, and referred to as the birth of her liberty; and the cradle in which, Hercules like, she strangled the serpents of despotism and venality. By applying these observations to the question, and what we might conjecture about the conduct of the Refugees, in either of the above-stated emergencies, I think Government is not in honour bound to support them.

The proposer of the question now rose, and according to his usual custom went a tedious round to the subject. No Presbyterian Divine who lived 100 years ago, ever was more formal in his divisions than this Gentleman is, when he takes time to study the question. He divided the inhabitants of North America into five classes. 1st, The natives of the country, and the natives of Great Britain. 2d, Ignorant and timid people. 3d, Party men. 4th, Revenue and Excise officers. 5th, Governors and military gentlemen. Of the characters of each of these, he favoured us with a philosophical and political analysis; through which we have no inclination

to follow him, only remind the audience, how severely he inveighed against Governor H——, whose history he gave us, and proved him to have been a chief spring of the present disturbances; and one of the most artful, unprincipled hirelings, which a despicable Administration ever employed. At last he came to the question;

And drew an exceeding lively picture of the complicated calamities which these troubles had brought upon thousands in that country. Every day he walked the streets of this great metropolis, his eyes were struck with the sight of men, reduced from affluence to penury, from opulent fortunes to the lowest dependence—obliged to use interest to obtain a scanty pittance from the bounty of a Ministry, whom they knew to be the source of all their woes. The wives and children, inured to delicacy and ease—the sprightly youth and the timid lovely virgin, pining disconsolate—being forced from the seats of tender and social attachments—from their pleasant lawns and improved patrimonies, to seek their subsistence on a strange and distant shore. Where can such with more propriety fly, than to the arms of British heroism? Against such—could Britons shut the doors of compassion? To such—could Englishmen refuse to act a brother's part? In fine, can it be a question,

tion, that Government is in honour bound to support them?

He was followed by two Gentlemen on the same side, of whom the first rather gave an abstract of Ministerial proceedings in that country since the year 1760, than any thing new on the question. He sensibly traced the steps which had led to this dangerous crisis—feelingly lamented the miseries of America, and thought her hapless sons, who fled for succour to the parent country, by the very act brought certificates of their allegiance, and therefore were entitled to the protection of this country.

The other apprehended, we ought to form an oath somewhat similar to that of allegiance, for all Refugees to take, whereby we might be more secure of their attachment to the interests of this country. He further thought—they would supply our arts and manufactures with useful hands; whereby the numbers of our own people, engrossed by the Army and Navy, would be less missed. If we receive them not, they will fly to other countries. Let us take warning from the impolicy of France in the expulsion of the Hugonots: England and Germany, by receiving them, reaped the fruits of the arts and manufactures, they brought with them.

In opposition to this: a Gentleman entered deeply into the conduct of the Refugees. Many

grievous hardships were doubtless suffered by thousands of virtuous people in that country, but he much questioned if the generality of the Refugees were of that number. He surmised the majority of them were artful men, who having left connexions there, came here with a view so to improve contingencies, that go things as they would, they, and theirs, might sustain no loss. Besides, if they were such staunch friends to Government as they pretended, why did they not stay, and help the many thousands of loyalists who were still in that country? If they would not fight, *pro aris et focis*, when both were in their immediate view, what had Britain in any other cause to expect from them? Let them look at the examples of a Gardiner and an Elliott, then blush! The first gloriously fell in sight of his own house, at the head of the poor remains of a regiment which adored him, that had been cut to pieces by the rebels: and the other, animated with duty to his Sovereign and his country, while inspired by the sight of his natal shore, thundered on the Gallic squadron, till a Thurot died a victim to his martial prowess.

One ingenious young Gentleman gave somewhat a new turn to the debate, by supposing, that if Government were not bound in honour, yet

yet principles of policy should determine them to it. This position he established by a number of striking reflections.

The question being put—it was decided by a great majority, that Government ought not to support them.

DECEMBER 6th, 1779.

Whether the encouragement given by this country to our inveterate enemies the French and Spaniards, is not at all times impolitic, and in the present crisis dangerous ?

THIS question was proposed by a worthy clergyman, whose good sense hath frequently been beneficial to the Westminster Forum. 'Tis true, he but seldom speaks in the Society, resulting from his entertaining a greater distrust of his own abilities, than the little he hath said ever gave the audience the least room to conjecture, much less to believe.

The adopter of the question found fault with the terms wherein it was couched ; for upon what pretext can the Spaniards be called the inveterate enemies of this country, when we recollect the marriages and alliances, which have subsisted between the Sovereigns of the two countries ; and what is more, the Spaniards do not flock hither in proportion to the French, and only few of our countrymen travel through Spain ; consequently the conjunction of the nations in the question is incongruous. With relation to the French, the matter is widely different.

ferent. He who has not seen France, is scarce supposed to have seen any thing. Not to have visited Italy, and in the way thither, made a considerable stay at Paris, would be accounted unpardonable in our young nobility, and men of fashion. They return in general replenished with superficial notions of men and manners—even with an inadequate idea of places—but plentifully stocked with refinements in luxury, and an evident, though unjust, contempt of their native country, as well as of its manufactures, which are the sinews of its strength. Nothing save what is French will they use—nothing save what is French will they esteem. This is not all—they disdain the poor of their countrymen: without French or Italian servants, they could neither eat nor dress. No wonder these lazy and effeminate mortals keenly attach themselves to Monsieur L'Anglois, because however weaker his brain, his purse is heavier, and his table better, than those of their own country. Nevertheless, so far is this from extinguishing their love for their natal soil, that it tends to expand their ambition, from the opportunity it yields them of serving her. They become spies upon their masters, and the intentions of that very government under whose mildness they are suffered to flourish. By the tricks of such wretches, the arcana of empire

have been fathomed ; and perhaps more intelligence transmitted to the enemies of our happy constitution, than the firmest friends to it, could on the most pressing demands, or intercession obtain.

Another speaker thought it politic in a nation to encourage foreigners, for these amongst other reasons : because, we became acquainted with their different forms of policy, and were enabled to correct and improve our own. From intercourse with them—future benefits accrued to our trade—connections were formed—and thus the prospects of gain enlarged. In vindication of French servants, it was alledged, they were better to the master, being more pliant to command, than the natives of Britain commonly were ; and also, that by employing only such in menial purposes, it was preserving the innate British spirit unbroke ; consequently, animating it for the occupations of peace, or fitting it for the more active operations of war.

It was advanced, that none but men of education and some talents, were qualified to dive into secrets, or be the mediums of intelligence, and of course, there was little danger from the bulk of the servants imported from France into this kingdom. A digression took place, concerning the French being quicker at invention, and the English at finishing. The notions under which
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the French and Spaniards are concluded inimical to this realm, were said, principally to arise from education. It was the practice to imbue our early years, with some anticipated enmity against them; which induced the multitude to assent to that as a truth, the grounds whereof, they had never been at pains to examine.

The Gentleman who gave in the question now rose, and, full of the idea of liberty, defended the propriety of Englishmen employing whom they pleased, without the least embarrassment or restraint. The very attempt to do this, he construed an incroachment on the sacred privileges, wherewith an Englishman was born.

This tenet was strongly controverted. In times of profound peace, reasons were pointed out against the opening too wide a door for the encouragement of foreigners; and in times of danger there remained no doubt of its being highly impolitic. This Gentleman particularly replied to the vague harangue of a former speaker. To pick up matters of intelligence in this country, required little education, and to transmit them, no arduous or hazardous enterprise. Neither was it less frivolous or absurd, to ascribe that to the prejudices of education, which our history from its earliest date evinces, which the natural situation of countries creates, which our constitutional interests require, and which now the difference of our religion must

must for ever keep alive. He concluded by quoting the former acts, which used to be put in force against the admission or continuance of foreigners in this realm, in times of war. If expedient then—why not now? If salutary at one period—might they not be so at another?

A learned Gentleman recommended union and confidence among ourselves. Our fears, yea our dangers, arose from the want of these, whereas, if these existed, the question became of no moment; for then we were invincible, nor was there any foundation to conjecture, that the machinations of our enemies could prosper.

Shakespeare's Shylock now craved the attention of the Forum—by an excellent speech, replete with nervous sense, and pertinent observations. Nations, he said, arrived at greatness, in proportion as they acquired refinement of manners. By refinement of manners he understood moral rectitude, consequently concluded that morals make a nation great, while immorality proves the ruin of any people. A false refinement, in other words, one not founded on the principles of virtue, must produce contrary effects, to those that subsist in the early periods of civil society. Here he described the manners of this country some centuries ago, in a very humorous and laughable way. Greece made the Romans bad, just as the French had done

done us : their effeminacy hath greatly unnerved British heroism , their excessive complaisance, hath supplanted our blunt, but antient integrity—in a word, they have ruined our Drama ! This last grievance hurt him exceedingly, therefore he thought, we ought on no account to encourage them.

The question being put—it was carried, that we ought not to encourage them,

DECEMBER 13th, 1779.

Have, or have not, the noble Lords who have withdrawn from Administration, shewn themselves friends to their King and Country in so doing ?

THOUGH the author of this question is unknown ; some conjectures were formed, from its being given in by a Gentleman belonging to the Treasury. Being a temporary one, it was brought forward with all possible expedition, that the debate might take place, ere the subject of it ceased to engross public conversation.

The Gentleman who adopted the question apprehended, that the withdrawing of the two noble Lords at such a period as this, would injure their country. He conceived, that the Lords G— and W—— were meant by the question, the one having resigned, a little before, his seat in the Council as President ; the other, the office of Secretary of State for the Southern department. He judged it the duty of every man, in whatever sphere of life he moved, never to take his hand from the wheel while the load was in danger of falling. Coalition of parties, and a general union, persevered in, were now the

most probable means of saving this country.
The quotation from Cato,

When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,
The post of honour is a private station,

was too often adduced in vindication of matters of this kind; for, allowing the sentiment to be in general beautifully just, yet, were all great men to think so, who would stem the torrent, or who would sustain the fatigues of public life? In the present case, the aid and counsel of powerful men were requisite, and whoever refused either, were not the friends of their King and Country.

The second speaker doubted the reality of the secession of these noble Lords: what induced him to form this opinion, was, their mode of procedure when the interests of the nation came before them. This he reckoned a better way of learning their genuine political character, than merely from their being among the In's or Outs. On this ground he arraigned the truth of their secession, because they still voted with Ministry. This he proved from his being in the House of Peers a few days before, and when a noble Lord (S——) was employing his almost perfect oratory—his manly sense—and what is more, the integrity of an upright heart, in painting the distresses of the nation, which

which called for a change of men and measures ;
 —and for a reduction of the extravagant expenditure of public money, the two noble Lords alluded to, voted against him. Now, keeping the inference from this in view, what can we expect from an union with wickedness, folly, and ignorance ? Let us consider the position. Would to God we were unable to prove it ! That an union with the present Administration is an alliance with wickedness, appears, if not from the principles wherewith they began the American war ; from the mode in which it has been conducted—the temper they have shewn in the various stages of it—and the means devised to support it. Probably to gratify with places, or procure money to grant pensions to a set of hungry minions, who had prostituted their honour at the infernal shrine of venality ; and disregarded their country, provided they enhanced themselves—the taxation of America, not constitutionally represented, had been deemed expedient. How did Ministry act, when resisted in that unjust measure ? They confounded every thing sacred and profane : this the Greeks and Romans stamped as the infallible criterion of absolute degeneracy ; and, oh ! shame to tell ! Britons did this, and Administration suffered it with impunity, since they never called the perpetrators to account, nor even blamed them, till
 other

other misfortunes had furnished them with different pretexts. The sacred temples of religion were converted into playhouses—towns were burnt upon report—men, women, and children, put to the sword, without distinction—without mercy—and in direct violation of the laws both of humanity and of war. After all, Britons could neither repress the ardour of American heroism, nor satiate the indignation of an English Administration. Mercenaries were hired to do the work, while the virtuous, industrious poor at home, groaned under the burden of paying for them. What petty German Prince would refuse to lend them? and what soldier of theirs, when he arrived at America, and saw that the land was good, struggling, yea, bleeding for liberty, and full of milk and honey, but would wish to settle in it? Their folly is no less conspicuous in a thousand instances, needless to be mentioned, before a British audience, and as to their ignorance, it can only be surpassed by their guilt.

When Gentlemen talk of an union, they ought deeply to ponder the proposal—first minutely examine the real character and views of those whom they wish to be supported—also the contending powers—and the consequences, that may be expected from persisting in the contest. The true friends of the King and Country de-
voutly

voutly wished him a downy pillow—'tis the Ministry—O dreadful infatuation! that very Ministry whom he loves, who have planted it with thorns—involved him in dangers—and lost the brightest gem in his crown. These two very Lords have in a great measure been the causes of all the evils brought on this country. Look at their conduct during the first stages of the American war. I dread it is not from public virtue—but from some private pique, that they have seceded. He owned having himself heard one of the two noble Lords declare in the House—that he could no longer coincide with the measures of the present Ministry. On hearing this, he trembled, nor could form any idea of what scheme laid by, or proposed in the cabinet, it might be, which had even affected the conscience of a Nobleman, who had never shewn reluctance to, or dissatisfaction with, any part of the same system, during preceding years.

The third speaker wished entirely to wave the question, imagining we were not qualified to judge upon it, not being acquainted with their real motives: wherefore he moved—that the President do write them a card, begging to know these. Since, however, without this, conjectures were hazarded, he claimed the same privilege. One of the noble Lords had in the course of last session pledged himself concerning

cerning Irish affairs, but the neglect of his coadjutors, together with the spirited exertions of the Irish themselves, had put it out of his power to fulfil his promise; and because he could no longer delude, he quitted that helm, which no more would yield to his hand. Did such a conduct merit praise? What streams could wash out such pusillanimity? The nature of the motives inducing these noble Lords to resign, must render abortive the utility of the example.

Another Gentleman, by way of confirming part of what the second Speaker had advanced, insisted, that there was more than ignorance and folly in such an union as the first recommended. There was infamy in any connexion with such an Administration as the present; and there was also treachery to the constitution, and to the most precious rights of Englishmen. These had been violated. Durst any one deny it? If common law makes the receiver share the punishment of the thief, are they blameless who are the abettors of an Administration, that all good and disinterested men either openly execrate, or secretly deplore. Though late—let us receive them. It may be the eleventh hour of our political existence—still there is hope. The greater the danger, the readier should we be to

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receive assistance from every quarter. Till the present system is broke—deliverance can never happen. Support that, and our calamities must increase: every secession weakens it, and those who first withdraw, derive some sort of merit from their own courage. Another benefit from this conduct is, that they hereby become monitors of the people, by warning them of their danger, whereby the nation, by beholding impending destruction, may adopt proper expedients to divert the storm.

He was followed by a Gentleman, who thought an union advisable, but with other men than the present Ministry, and on an opposite plan. Let the battles in America speak their panegyric. One Gentleman wishes you, Mr. President, to write them a card, begging them to explain themselves. Why this? they have explained themselves, and that before the great council of the nation. What they have done is known to all. They have dismembered the empire—they have divided the nation. They have exhausted our strength—and squandered the public money, while now, insensible of their guilt, nor fearful of recompence, they quarrel about the remainder. A digression on Irish affairs was permitted, which ended with warmly recommending Associations in this country, similar to what had taken place there.

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The subsequent Speaker directly replied to the former. Thought this not a time to change Ministers, but to enable them to act with force and vigour against the House of Bourbon; examined the digression about Ireland, where he endeavoured to correct some of his opponents notions of fear, as applied to the two noble Lords: granted the idea of unanimity to be praise-worthy, yet, unless founded on proper grounds, ought not to be enforced, nor can be of long duration. Some peculiar strictures having been made on the conduct of Opposition, this Gentleman, in an intelligent manner, defended them.

One who had already spoke, used the privilege of replying to those differing from him; and adduced the image of a house on fire: Admitting those who set fire to the house are the first to cry for assistance, much may be saved by the skill and activity of others: If the nation was in such a perilous situation as had been delineated, those who sounded the alarm were indisputably friends to it. He continued to reprobate any partial secession—prayed the noble Lords to do it in reality: was puzzled to determine on the influence they still seemed to be under, dreaded there was a something of a bias far from being right; nay, inimical to our
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happy constitution in Church and State, who presided in directing matters, though behind the curtain—witness the characters of their successors, the tools of a Minister, or the immediate connexions of those, whose politics had already disgraced, and bade fair to ruin this nation.

The question being put—It was carried, that they had shewn themselves friends to their King and Country.

DEC. M.

DECEMBER 20th, 1779.

Which of the two is most hurtful to Civil Society, the Spendthrift or the Miser?

THIS question, with that on the affairs of Ireland, were the President's. We have already spoke of the motives which rendered the latter of these both important and interesting; and the propriety of philosophical questions being intermingled, must strike every one who considers the present rage for politics: admitting the national prospects at this juncture to be exceeding gloomy, nor denying it to be the duty of those who see the yielding precipice, to alarm the thoughtless and secure, we must nevertheless acknowledge, that Societies like the Forum do not altogether consist of Quidnuncs. Men of a more serious and philosophical turn of mind, also resort thither; and however much they may be pleased with good speaking, yet without a variety in the themes, their attention will languish, and even the speeches will become insipid. Ingenious and subtle questions in morals do necessarily engage men of such a turn—they prove an agreeable relaxation to the audience, and make the veriest Quidnunc imaginable, return with greater *gout* and ardour to

his darling topics. Prompted by these reflections, the President had thrown in the present question.

It was adopted by a well-known Cleric, whose sudden rise in the oratorical list was certainly meritorious, since, when he first set out in life, he commanded neither fortune, nor friends. Being lucky enough to meet with patrons in his early attempts, his abilities improved from the encouragement given them. Fame soon became loud and zealous in his praise. He in the summer seasons travelled from place to place, as a model of elocution—his lectures on composition—on the art of speaking—on the beauties of poetry, particularly those of Shakespear and Milton, with the other most approved poets of this country, were attended by the learned and polite circles wherever he came. In winter he delivered these lectures at Essex House in the Strand, and on the sabbath evenings preached to an elegant and fashionable audience at the Old Jewry, where the celebrated Foster formerly enraptured his every hearer. At this period the opener of the debate had fortune at his feet; but he kicked the ball from him.

This once-renowned Orator had some time ago conformed. The public, familiarized to his name, and whose generous shoulders had long most chearfully supported him, imagined they

they had a right to inquire into the motives of the change. Mild Charity, with her amiable sister, blue-eyed Candour, of softest hue, ascribed it to conviction: for sure, said their heavenly lips, it could not otherwise have happened.

Several laid it at the door of a venerable, and learned Prelate, whose activity in bringing it about, at least rendered the idea of solicitation probable: and from such a quarter, what will not solicitation do?

Others again imputed it to the neglect, where-with he had for some time past been treated, by those Clergymen, with whom he was wont to associate. Should even this last, be the fact, it was far more excuseable in him, than in many of his countrymen, who, to evade some of the forms, enjoined by the Church of Scotland, come up to London, where they take orders among the Dissenters, though they herd not with them, a day longer, than they can conform on any tolerable prospect of success. Without having received the least provocation, they do this—neither do they think it requisite to assign a reason for their change, to those they leave. To the Bishop they must; and therefore, before him, they plead the strongest conviction. I remember being once in conversation, with a Gentleman who was accounted an excellent preacher among the Dissenters, nor a mean writer, as his discourses

shew, he offered the following apology—
 That every man should conform to the religious
 mode of those among whom he meant to live;
 to which, if he could not agree, he ought never
 to have left the country in which he was born.
 Soon after this, I learned that a few weeks be-
 fore, this same Gentleman, had accepted of a
 curacy. Other very recent examples to a similar
 import might easily be quoted. Mankind pass
 these over in silence, on account of their insigni-
 ficancy—whereas him to whom we at first al-
 luded, possesses great abilities, and in proportion
 to his fame, was the talk concerning his
 change.

Perceiving the Forum to be place of genteel
 resort, he tried to re-establish his lectures there,
 and, imagining his speaking might be of service
 in the affair, he had given his word to the
 President, that he would open this question.

He thought spendthrifts were by far more per-
 nicious to civil society than misers. A miser's
 conduct he vindicated on the principles of œco-
 nomy, and from a regard he might have for
 posterity; and contended, that œconomy was
 more than an excellent virtue, it was a prolific
 mother, who counted in her train a number of
 lovely habits, reared under her watchful eye.
 He supposed his opponents would, as usual,
 have recourse to a well-known book, entitled,
 —“The Fable of the Bees”—the grand posi-
 tion

tion of which is—That private vices are public benefits—a tenet absolutely false, for the vices of the spendthrift are not of a private nature. Such a character, for the most part, values not concealment—besides, could not have the appellation, till there had appeared sufficient grounds for it.

The Gentleman who succeeded, thought both of them might be honest in the extremes of their character. This metaphysical assertion, he illustrated in an obscure way. Afterwards, he adjudged the miser the most odious, because he subverts the dictates of nature, equally, as the maxims of civil society, in rendering useless what might prove useful; whereas the spendthrift less irritated our feelings, because, notwithstanding we blamed him, personally considered, yet his profusion becomes a public benefit. For one miser who doth not infringe almost every other virtue, there are ten spendthrifts who are only vicious in peculiar lines, and to a certain excess. The spendthrift indiscriminately opens his purse, wherefore there are many chances of its being sometimes for worthy purposes. Granting his family may be destitute—his tradesmen now and then ruined, and he himself die insolvent—is not the miser worse? who by the indulging his covetousness, often sacrifices the honour and tenderest interests of his family—is deaf to the claims of society—
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and renounces the obligations of virtue. There is a glorious medium, and thrice happy they who discern it, and invariably pursue it.

The third Speaker contended that spendthrifts were the most detrimental to mankind, because they were the travelling teachers of profligacy: they spend their fortunes amongst the most abandoned—or in methods only conducing to multiply that wretched number. In the hands of debauchees, money becomes a real obstruction to each purpose of social life. On the contrary, misers, induced by their ruling passion, do not hoard up their money in chests; they take interest for it, are not destitute of every virtue, as hath been alledged, seeing they are industrious and frugal, ergo beneficial to the community.

The next Speaker found fault with those who had gone before him in the debate, for blending the characters. He pictured them separate, and remarked on the amazing extent, and inevitable effects of a spendthrift's example, to spread desolation wherever he came. For instance, a spendthrift of quality, in proportion to his capability of serving his country, from the honours or opulence wherewith birth endows him, excites our contempt by the abuse. With heart-felt indignation we survey him, first contaminating his equals in rank and dignity; and afterwards,

afterwards, through a variety of subordinate classes, disseminating vice and corruption, till finally he sinks into a jockey at Newmarket—a loader of dice at Almack's—or a pimp to those vices in others, with which he can no longer gratify himself. There were also ministerial spendthrifts, who made a race-horse of Britannia—let them but once mount, then whip—spur—let us distance all others—though the animal sink at the post. Among the mechanical and lower order of spendthrifts, we find consequences no less fatal; were it not for the limited nature of their operations, and that their career is in general sooner ended. But the miser, even when most extensive in his influence, was not near so detrimental to society.

Another Speaker confined his view of the debate solely to this point—which of them was likeliest to become the tool of the Minister? In his opinion, it was the miser, wherefore he gave his voice against him.

He was followed by our excellent humorist, who never rose to speak, without exciting the curiosity of the company to hear. He averred the spendthrift to be most pernicious, who, he said, could not be honest, because he robs a future day of its support. He granted some characters were both apparently the one and the other, under some peculiar restrictions.

Drawing

Drawing his reflexions from the complexion of the present times, he reprobated all notions of pomp and splendour. With respect to what had been advanced against chusing examples from the most worthless of the people, it was to put them on a level with Ministers, who were the most worthless of mankind. Travelling had been mentioned—he sincerely wished there existed an act of parliament, to prevent the exportation of English fools.

The subsequent Speaker contrasted the characters, by viewing them in the several relations of social life. More injury frequently happened to connexions from the prodigality of the spend-thrift, than from the selfishness of the miser : in morals the reverse took place, from the different light wherein the objects were beheld, since in the one it is the vice of the head, in the other that of the heart : the corollary from which was a fact—namely, thousands of instances from ancient story—from modern—and many within the knowledge of those present, might be quoted, of prodigals having been reclaimed : whereas few of misers have been named, and scarce any of these, the reality of which hath not been doubted. What a superiority this gives the one character above the other ! yet it hath been thought amply counterbalanced by the very effects of avarice upon its votaries

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in perilous times, in that they contribute liberally to the public safety : they in truth can do it, but the spendthrift cannot.

The eighth Gentleman who took a part in this debate, judiciously and logically argued, against the promiscuous imputation of all vices, to either character. He proved such a mode to be unphilosophical, and impossible in the nature of things. Notwithstanding the diametrical opposition of the characters in most respects, the fact remained undeniable, that misers may have many of those vices ascribed to spendthrifts. This one position led him to take a new view of them, which he concluded, with asserting the spendthrift to be the better character.

He who spoke next, contradicted this for a variety of reasons, though he esteemed himself sufficiently supported on the single proof, that the spendthrift not only throws away his fortune, but also destroys the remotest principles of his credit, whereas the money hoarded up by the miser, may be useful to posterity, and in their hands answer every valuable and generous purpose of social life : on which account, he gave his opinion, that the miser was the least hurtful of the two to civil society.

The tenth Speaker on this subject was an orator indeed. We will not attempt an epitome of his reasoning, or pretend to describe the sweetness

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ness and propriety of his elocution. He gave a special answer to the remarks of the Gentleman who had spoke the sixth in the debate ; allowed his talent for humour to be considerable ; while he denied his having adduced any thing like proofs.

In opposition to another ingenious member, he contended, that the so-much-boasted virtues of spendthrifts, such as sympathy with the distresses of others, generosity, and those of a like nature, frequently were in the possession of misers—even they may be benevolent.—Some instances might be drawn from their actions in life—but more especially from their last wills : whereby they bequeathed the whole to public charities. Suppose the worst of the miser, that he painfully traverses every field to glean even the most scanty pittance, which he scruples to touch himself, and guards with the most unwearied diligence ; yet what heart would not leap for joy, to see the full sheaf at last thrown into the bosom of the indigent ? On the other hand, whence originated dependence, the Egyptian bondage of a Briton, but from that extravagance, so oft the bane of every virtue ? In these degenerate days—he that enforced moderation and œconomy in public expenditures, ought to have a statue erected to his honour. Aristotle placed all virtue in a mean ; now is

the time for it, in reality, to acquire the name of golden.

It being a rule in the Forum—that the opener of the question has a right to reply, the President now called upon him, who used his privilege, which was simply a recital of what had been said.

The question being put—It was carried, that the Spendthrift is the most hurtful to civil Society.

Some person present the above evening, wrote the following verses on the 23d, as appears from the date annexed to them, which were inserted in the Morning Chronicle a few days after.

MARTHA MARK'EM TO KITTY CURIOUS.

DEAR KITTY,

I left you on Monday, you know,
To call for my cloak at Miss Gimp's in Soho;
Well, when I came there, behold a great groupe
Of tittupping lasses, all cock-a-hoop;
With caps and calashes all in decorum,
Just setting off for the Westminster Forum.
Oh! Patty, cries they, you must go with us,
So I straightway agreed, not to make a fuss.
Says I, to Miss Bushel Cap, as we jogged on,
The Forum! what is it?—says she tis the *son*;
Oh! that was enough, for it would be uncivil,
Not to follow the *son*, tho' one goes to the devil.

Now,

Now, Kitty, the Forum's a place for debate,
 On matters of taste, and matters of state;
 Frequented by people of different classes,
 Old dons and young smarts, old dames and young lasses.
 Cries a lady in black, according to Bailey,
 A Forum a market was, weekly or daily.
 'Twas also a court, Madam, cries out another,
 Where pleaders and spouters made a great pother.
 As an audience antient, Ma'am, we are embarked,
 For don't Greenwood's rooms here, lie in a market?
 And might not the Romans and Grecians, I pray,
 As well as we Britons, have markets for hay?
 That they had too Apollo's †, a matter of course is,
 And who ever doubted their having Black Horses †?
 But I never have found any tokens at all,
 Either Romans or Greeks had a Coachmakers Hall.

Well, when we got there, the croud was so thick, it
 Was hard to get in with our sixpenny ticket:
 At eight came the Chairman in state through the throng,
 Who being quite jolly could scarce get along.
 The Chairman safe seated, "to order" 's the call,
 The meaning of which is, men's hats come off all.
 Then after some questions read out for their choice,
 The subject in course comes on in a trice.

Now mind you the question for that night's discourse,
 "Of Miser or Spendthrift, which may be the worse?"
 The debate proved trifling, tedious, and dull,
 Its decision as stupid and queer to the full.

† † Apollo (or King's Arms) and Black Horse, names for
 other disputing Societies now in being.

It was, that the Spendthrift was worse than the Miser,
 Lord! surely the City than these must be wiser,
 Who by choosing of Wilkes in a recent contest,
 Proved—of all men, a Spendthrift was certainly best.

M. MANNING.

It may here be necessary to obviate an objection—Why insert a trifling matter that may have found its way into a news-paper? This never was intended by us: nor would we have taken the least notice of the above, as they have neither sense, wit, nor poetry, to recommend them; but from this one consideration, that they gave rise to a poem far superior in every respect, replete with good sense, propriety, and satire, which we shall lay in its proper place before our readers.

DECEMBER 27th, 1779.

Whether the Calamities of the Empire are to be attributed more to the intrigues of the Cabinet, the venality of Parliament, or the profligacy and servility of the people?

THIS question was given in by a Gentleman of whom we have already spoke, whose talents shine more in writing, than in speaking. Whatever reasons the Forum hath frequently had to complain, of the tedious and eccentric speeches he whined out to them, from time to time; they were surely obliged to him for the fairness and clearness wherewith he had stated this question. If for once we be permitted to speak in the theatrical stile, it brought a full house; there being upwards of seven hundred Ladies and Gentlemen convened to hear the discussion.

The Gentleman who opened the debate, apprehended that the present calamities, however manifold and pressing, were not owing to Parliament in a collective capacity; nor to the people considered in the same point of view; but were solely to be imputed to the accursed, and destructive intrigues of the Cabinet. In
order

order to establish this fact, he recited a variety of those glaring and fatal miscarriages, which had peculiarly marked, and were the natural offspring of the present Administration. To name them individually is unnecessary, since they must obtrude on the recollection of the most unthinking Briton. He recounted several of those petitions, which had been neglected, nay spurned at with the most stubborn contempt, both those offered in the true spirit of loyalty by the Americans, during the several stages of this bloody and unconstitutional contest, and by many respectable bodies of merchants, in this country. He dwelt on that inattention so visible in the conduct of Ministers, respecting the West India Islands; which were in danger of being devoured by that foe, whose flag triumphant flies in those seas.

The Author of the question now rose, who being prepared for the subject, and conscious of the wide range he generally took, begged the candour and patience of that very respectable Society. His introductions were for the most part liable to the objection that hath been made to those of Sallust, namely, that they would equally suit all questions. On this occasion he favoured us with his opinion, in the first sentence, importing, that the malady lay in a want of principle in the people: to which he sub-

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joined as collateral causes, or rather as effects of the former, what he called a defect in the spirit of union, or in that of the spirit of defence. Here he indulged his usual vein, in descanting upon the effects of commerce—and argued, that previous to a nation or community arriving at their zenith, these were beneficial—afterwards they became hurtful. He endeavoured to prove, that commerce eats out honour and religious impressions.

The next Speaker said, it was in the very nature of Englishmen never to be contented, either in peace or war, be the circumstances of either what they may. To rail at Ministers, and censure those in power, or honour, seemed as natural, as if it had been enacted by Magna Charta, or sucked in with their mother's milk. He had been reading the English history for a week, and this was one fruit of his study.

He who went after in debate observed, that if facts minutely examined, best indicated the nature of the cause: secrets might be kept, to fathom the depths of hidden influence, or trace the springs of action, might baffle the industry of the most penetrating; but the real situation of public affairs for a series of past years, fully authorized our forming a judgment concerning the ratio of their abilities who conducted them. This being uniformly from evil to worse, put
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the impotency or wickedness of our rulers beyond a doubt. He replied to the Gentleman who ascribed the present calamities to the people—bade us look back to what Britain was!—Here he recounted the reigns and periods, when the trumpet of fame told her splendor—her riches—and her conquests, to an admiring world. Then he called our serious attention to what she now is—neglected by all—insulted by many—pitied by few—and, what forms the deepest sabbath in the picture, divided at home; her private laurels blasted, and her public virtue dead. All which he imputed to the intrigues of the Cabinet.

The fifth Speaker replied particularly to him, who mentioned general discontent, and that there always had been an unsatisfied Minority in this country; nor could refrain from expressing his astonishment at the prodigious discovery which a week's reading had occasioned. He proceeded to the Parliament, which he denominated the Minister's bag, by thrusting his hand in, being thoroughly acquainted with its contents, he took out just the tools fit for his complicated purposes. He was entirely against depicting the people in the colours that had been used that evening. If there remained the least sparks of virtue in this kingdom, they inherited it, and only from the exertions of it in

that quarter, did the most distant hope of reformation and amendment arise. It was obstructing the good, so earnestly prayed for by every lover of his country, to think the people so despicable as they had been represented in the course of the debate—witness the election of the present Members for Middlesex and Hampshire, where Ministry had done their utmost, and yet been worsted in their illegal and inglorious devices. There the virtue of the people secured the freedom of election. Thence it might be inferred—that whilst this lives, the country cannot be ruined. Numerous and alarming misfortunes, like Job's messengers of old, pressed hard upon the heels of one another, nor was the quarter different whence they came—from hell, in alliance with the most venal of Parliaments, that ever sapped the foundations of British liberty. This, 'tis true, did not create, yet it nourished and gave strength to the intrigues of the Cabinet, while these in their turn, artfully displayed the lures of venality, to the virtuous representatives of the people. When a Pulteney descended into an Earl of Bath, the patriot expired, and the character of the man was for ever lost. If the people were profligate, it resulted from the power of example. The manners of the court invariably tintured those of the people. Thus history taught—A King James,

James, who by being a Sovereign spoiled an excellent schoolmaster, was constantly surrounded with a set of men, who, from the Bishop to the meanest courtier, dealt in nothing but puns and scholastic quiddities. The easy reign of Charles had similar effects. The Independents prayed Kings out of their lives, Parliaments out of their authority, and individuals out of their property. The hypocrisy of a Cromwell filled the nation with Fanatics, and designing men. The next was a dissipated Monarch, who produced an infamous court, who scared virtue into retirement, and lessened her authority with the multitude. Under his successor, bigotry to prerogative, and other political absurdities, denominated the public character, while they depressed the national fire and spirit. Public virtue, and a passion for military fame, next distinguished us, under the auspices of Him, who had freed us from thralldom and slavery. Whig and Tory then came into vogue, and divided the nation. During the two succeeding reigns, wisdom and renown, both in the senate and the field, enhanced the glory of England; while George III, of pious morals, and real goodness, as husband, father, master, is surrounded with the most guilty and worthless set of men that ever lived.

The sixth Speaker coincided in opinion with the last, and, not satisfying himself with retracing the venality of Parliament, took a view of the sources whence it derived its support, and the instrument of its preservation: the former he attributed to the intrigues of the Cabinet, the latter to the servility and profligacy of the people. One comfort remained, that to most maladies there were remedies: the quickness of the application should be determined by the strength of the disease. By way of pointing out what cure he meant, he concluded with quoting the respectable testimony of Algernon Sidney, who had in many cases established the necessity of resistance.

He was followed by a Gentleman, who never rose to speak without receiving the highest tokens of applause, and was heard with the most pleased and fixed attention. He set out with tracing effects to their causes, which in politics, as in natural philosophy, led to the truest conclusions—that the people first seduced, he thought contrary to the usual tide of public affairs—corruption never ascends—ergo the seat of government must be the center of corruption. It is the Ministers, who have spread corruption every where, to enable them to succeed the easier in their wicked designs. Amongst other means they had tried to effect this, few had succeeded better,

ter, than the introduction of Nabobs into parliament, and places of honour under the Crown. To make room for them, or such like supple, pliant characters, many old families of untarnished integrity, and staunch friends to revolution principles, were either expelled, or slighted in such a way as obliged them to retire. By this means not only parliaments became crowded with the creatures of a day, the sons of ill-got wealth, or of extravagance; and if so, where was the wonder that the dismal infection at last reached the people? Our ideas of the guilt might be formed from the story of Adam, Eve, and the Devil: of which celebrated trio, the third was the inventor, and successful executor of the deceit—the second a greater criminal than the first-named, though he was not without his share in the transgression. The allusion exactly hits this case. John Bull is Adam—Parliament is Eve—and the Minister the Devil. One apple damned, if not the eaters, the advisers to the action. The Garden of Eden could not hold half of the bushels that had been received and given, as douceurs for services done in St. Stephen's; while, (oh! shame to the dastardly virtue of Englishmen!) the receivers are supported, and the abominable givers allowed to be in power, and flourishing like the green bay-tree. While things run in such an impure channel, we

ought

ought more to wonder that public virtue at all survives, than that the servility and profligacy of the people is so great. Let us here discharge the tenderest office of humanity, which is to blend compassion with our censure: let us, in imitation of the pitying Angel mentioned by Sterne, drop the tear of compassion over what we have not been able to prevent; that we may wipe away the remembrance: by doing which, who knows—whether the perception of our sensibility, joined to our generosity, may not awaken the objects of it—call them into action—and lead them to juster and more glorious practices.

The eighth Speaker rose in all the glare and all the insignificance of his usual pomposity. He always expected more respect, than those, who intimately knew him, even dreamt he merited. He forgot that there existed a material difference between worth and honours. The one proved adequate to the felicity of the possessor, in the loneliest cottage; the other completed the wretchedness of the bearer in the princely palace, encircled with every trapping of wealth and gaiety: the one when beheld is admired; the other, without the former, is nothing but a brighter mirror to reflect disgrace. Most of this Gentleman's former speeches in the Forum were dogmatical: he pronounced tolerably well, but possessed no one qualification of an orator.

He had not one spark of animation in his harangues : and now and then his want of a liberal education plainly appeared. No doubt he was blessed with good natural parts, on the improvement of which he had taken some pains.

On this occasion he urged the necessity of paying proper respect to the Crown which protects us. Without this, anarchy and the wildest confusion must ensue. Our own property is concerned in the support we yield to the maintenance of lawful and just prerogative. He denied the propriety of considering Administration as the center of corruption ; but seemed eager to correct the freedom used by the Gentleman who had characterized the several reigns ; where he, in a kind of passion, reprobated the mode of comparing King James to a pitiful schoolmaster. Such language he deemed highly repugnant to the respect due to Majesty : and, without giving his own opinion decisively, rather arraigned the Cabinet : after all, considering this was a time of national danger, recommended union amongst ourselves, in order to render our public exertions more vigorous, and effectual, towards the regaining our importance among the states of Europe, our sovereignty on the seas, and the reviving of our commerce at home.

Another Speaker said our calamities were not so great as they had been described, and averred that

that Administration had been blamed in most things unjustly. They had planned well, the failure lay with those to whom the execution had been entrusted. This he thought evident from many incidents in the course of the American war. He mentioned several instances, but dwelt peculiarly on that of the H——, who he affirmed had often had it in their power to have finished the matter. Why they did not, could only be imputed either to their professional ignorance, or to their being actuated by some private views, incongruous to the duty they owed their King and Country. Here Administration may have been deceived, though not guilty.

No doubt, opposition is the soul of debate ; and it must hurt liberal minds not a little, when any respectable company, met for the purposes of free inquiry, seem dissatisfied with the contrast, or bestow all their applause to Speakers of one cast, while they indiscriminately manifest their disapprobation, of those who pursue a different line. That shewn to the last Speaker, was immediate, and withal so general, as obliged him to sit down. More candid—more like Englishmen far, to have heard him out—then confuted him by truth and justness of reasoning.

The last Speaker went on the same grounds, with more caution of expression : he advised

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us, by many warm inducements, to strengthen the hands of Administration at this crisis, but the hours of debate being elapsed, he was heard with impatience, and Gentlemen being now in the bustle of departure, we could not distinctly hear what he did say.

THE question then was adjourned—to

JANUARY 3d, 1780.

WE have already said, that adjourned questions seldom produce interesting debates. The reverse took place this evening. The impartial stating of the question not only gained it a crowded and genteel audience, but had induced some ingenious Gentlemen, of a disquisitive turn, to weigh the subject deliberately. They of course came prepared. To analyse their speeches, we own, would be injuring them. Wishing to avoid this, deters us from the attempt. How enriched this abstract must have been, if the Speakers themselves, had condescended to favour us with one from their own notes! In several cases, circumstances concurred to render this impracticable. These preliminaries must be our apology, both for conciseness and incorrectness,

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The debate this evening was opened by the proposer of the question, who reverted to his former ideas of commerce, with its effects. The manners of this country for a long time had been past their zenith. American and Asiatic wealth, joined to our frequent communications with French and Italian manners, having enervated our minds, had moreover debauched our principles. By alluring us to luxury, and an unmanly softness, the pristine vigour of our progenitors was lost, and the examples they bequeathed were overlooked in the refinements of modern fashions. Public education now stood on an improper ground, and was conducted on absurd principles. After the first parts were over, and the æra of travelling approached, what trammels clogged the tutors, who superintended it. Nor was this all—another error consisted in the very route they pursued. Instead of making all expedition to Paris, and thence to Italy, they ought to steer northward. Here tyranny appears in undress—there, it is gilded. Seldom at much pains to dive beyond the superficies of men or manners, they returned charmed with appearances—infatuated with trifles—and inured to indolence; neither excited to tread the active scenes in life, or fraught with knowledge sufficient to embellish the private. They are the murderers of time,

not the enjoyers of it. Their first work at noon, for they are not out of bed much sooner, is to read the Morning Post—then the amazing fatigue resulting from the etiquette of paying and receiving visits—then the important hours of dress—when it is time to go to dinner, from which, it would be ungentleel to rise for the remainder of the evening, unless to repair to some fashionable amusement, some route or midnight revel.

The second Speaker directly opposed the preceding assertions. He gloried in this undeniable truth—that science in all its branches was never better understood, nor so universally studied, as now in Great Britain, and, to their praise be it spoke, the most polished and improved understandings, are to be found, amongst our men of rank and fortune.

One Gentleman, in the course of the last Monday evening's debate, most resolutely advanced, that he knew of no calamities. It might be that Gentleman's peculiar felicity to feel none, but to say he knew of none, at once furnished us with the most despicable picture, both of his sense and his experience. Good God! how must the man's face be bronzed, who can presume to declare, in such an assembly as the Forum, the non-existence of public calamities? Would to Heaven it was as easy to remove them,

as to deny them ! Those of Ireland became so heavy, that they could no longer be endured—the people awoke—they associated—they armed—they disciplined—they were determined—the consequence was, that their affairs soon wore the most pleasing aspect. More was granted, than what at one time would have satisfied them. Forty-two thousand men in arms, by their representatives asked, and Government were afraid to deny. Had Ireland been as far distant from the seat of empire as America, Administration probably might have played the same game. The proximity of these bayonets to their bosoms, immediately fixed their mode of procedure. Unless some equally efficacious power is exerted on this side of the water, political ruin is wrote in legible characters on the walls of the empire.

'Tis true, Englishmen never perhaps were more servile than in the days of Queen Elizabeth ; yet they conquered a greater invasion than that which frightened our women last summer. If marks of the servility and profligacy of the people are inquired after, no doubt many may easily be found ; while the strongest will certainly appear to be, their turning their arms against those on the other side the Atlantic.

He who followed in the debate, likewise set himself to vindicate the character of our young

Noblemen and heirs of wealth. In doing this, he mentioned the affair of Omoa, conducted by young men, each allied to families of power, together with a Barrington and others. Besides, in spite of all that had been said about the degeneracy of Britons, they retained enough of martial courage, to rival their great grandfathers in heroic virtue, when the cause is just, and when they are properly led on. For half a century past, letters have not been deemed a necessary ingredient in the qualifications of either soldiers or General. He examined the character of B——, in a way not much to the credit of that Officer—lamented the usage he had received from the Ministry, yet did not hesitate to accuse him of several capital blunders, especially his own effeminacy, or his weakness of temper respecting others, in squandering away so much time as he did, in getting ready, luxuriant accommodations for the officers under his command, and their ladies, before he left the lakes. This he contrasted with the story told of a Scotch Chieftain in the year 1745—who in the severity of winter accustomed himself to lay in the open field, simply wrapped in his plaid—happened once to see his son supporting his head with a stone, kicked it away, and cursed his effeminacy. To shew, nevertheless, that such peculiarities did not al-

ways illustrate the real character, he added a third part to the contrast, namely that of a Petit Maître aboard the Centaur, last war, who in the heat of a desperate action, gave the most astonishing proofs of genuine valour, yet slept in white gloves every night. He ludicrously dissected the character of our young men drawn by the first Speaker, which he owned applicable to macaronies—not to men.

The next Speaker went nearly on the same grounds with the last; quoted the saying of Burleigh, in the time of Queen Elizabeth—that Parliaments only, can ruin this country; imputed all our disasters to the secret influence of the Cabinet. The maxim of Addison in his Cato, implying the post of honour to be a private station, when impious men bear sway, he proved to be erroneous: since, on that hypothesis, no attempts would ever be made to save a falling state. When wicked men have rule, he judged the post of honour to be the firm and open opposing of them.

The fifth Gentleman who spoke in this debate, derided the first in a very striking manner; and said, that if George Alexander Stevens had ever seen the Gentleman, there surely would not have been at this time, a person in the kingdom unacquainted with his ridiculous mode of speaking—his giving weight to trifles, and solemnity

lemnity to nonsense. He ascribed the group of our complicated misfortunes to the venality of Parliament—arraigned the Minority, by pointing out the inconsistency of their conduct, in a variety of instances, where that concerning Ireland obtained its deserved place.

He was followed by a Gentleman, who denied the implication of the inability, of the intrigues of the Cabinet, to bring on general ruin. This had been supposed by some of the preceding Speakers. With what face could they be thought unable to accomplish their respective ends, when the sums expended in contracts and secret-service money, were so enormous; places of profit so numerous; and a price given for almost every vote? As to Ireland, it was the Minority who urged the consideration of their affairs, and the granting them immediate relief:—it was the Ministry who refused. Whether they could corrupt, he would refer to counsel—and let W——— speak. Whether they had declined in their endeavours to do it—he begged us to ask a G——;—and whether they could surmount the most different sentiments formerly professed, nay even fix to their party, in opposition to the real dictates of a good understanding, though sometimes a weak memory, he would submit to Lord M——. Vice in
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this, as in other cases, spreads from the center to the extreme.

The seventh Speaker overturned the question, by attributing all our calamities to the Opposition. With the view of establishing this position, he mentioned an opinion of Junius, on which he laid very great weight. Descanted on the character of Grenville; the opposition to him, and to his political measures, disqualified him from carrying his designs, whereby the sovereignty of this country over the Colonies might probably never have been disputed. The voice of the Minority and the people then was—A Temple, and a Pitt, were to be supported—in other words, Colonies are to be hazarded, that a Minister should be disgraced.

The eighth and last Speaker went over a deal of the ground already traversed in the debate, and concluded, that the eloquence of Minerva could not have plunged the Colonies into a civil war, had it not resulted from their own conviction, that they were an oppressed, injured people, and that the schemes of our Cabinet were influenced by those, from whom liberty, and the privileges of Englishmen, could augur nothing favourable.

On the question being put—It was carried by a very great majority, that the calamities of the empire

empire are to be attributed to the intrigues of the Cabinet.

On Saturday, January 1st, 1780. The following dialogue appeared in the London Courant and Westminster Chronicle.

THE public may be assured, that the following very interesting dialogue took place last Tuesday, between two certain Great Personages, residing at the extremes of Pall Mall.

1st. Well, Pinchey, did you, as I directed, go to the Westminster Forum last night ?

2d. I obeyed your M——s commands.

1st. I don't doubt it, Pinchey, as I have long known your affection for my person, and zeal for my government. What passed ?

2d. Why, an please your M——, what they said there bordered upon treason;—but they qualified it by speaking very highly of your M——s person.

1st. Ah, Pinchey ! what did they say of my person ?

2d. Why, an please your M——, they abused your Ministry, said they were all traitors but one, whom they ridiculed for his piety, for singing psalms twice a day;—that your M—— was a good father,—a tender husband,—and every thing excellent—within the walls of B——m-

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house

house—and they deigned to take notice of me also.

1st. In what respect, Pinchey?

2d. They reflected on your M—— for encouraging the arts and sciences, in granting me a patent for my snuffers.

1st. Nay, Pinchey, they burlesqued both me and you there—for the invention, you know, you stole from the Rev. Doctor Truslove.

2d. Mum!—I never trusted any body with the secret but your M——, and I rely on your r——l and well-known justice, for your gracious letters patent for any similarly useful produce of ingenuity.

1st. You may depend on that, Pinchey, if you continue your informations of the proceedings of the Westminster Forum.

JANUARY

JANUARY 10th, 1780.

Which is most apt to procure general estimation, the reality of virtue, or the appearance of it ?

IT is not impossible for the proposer of a question, to be the only person who, can comprehend its meaning. It is an easy matter to clothe an idea with such words as shall entirely conceal it from ordinary understandings, and hold out either nothing distinct, or one perfectly different. When a question is not precisely stated, can we wonder at its being vaguely argued ? This hath induced many learned Gentlemen, who attend such places as the Forum, to invest the President, with the privilege of altering whatever he may judge amiss in the questions, previous to their being advertised for debate. Some little altercation having formerly taken place on this head—the President had hitherto used no such liberty, though, from what was said on this occasion, he owns he afterwards did. Another reason why he altered not the present question was, that a very judicious, fanciful—and eloquent Speaker warmly praised it, and intended to have adopted it. Unluckily, this

L 4 evening

evening he was absent, and we must confess, the debate was trifling and insipid.

The President had caught so severe a cold, as disqualified him for the duties of his office. The well-known abilities, however, of his ingenious and worthy friend, a student of the Temple, who presided for him, prevented the Society from sustaining the least inconvenience, except a few minutes disorder, owing to the very singular impoliteness of one Gentleman, remarkable for expecting the attention of the Society, which the majority never but once seemed disposed to think his speeches deserved : and this we can assure the public was not the time. No sooner, we say, had the President made his own apology, so low, that one third of the audience did not hear him, and craved their candour for his friend, who now stepped into the chair, and read the question, when up rose the aforesaid hero, and told the Society, that he was an enemy to prerogative of every kind, especially to that of the Chair, from which, he said, on the preceding evening, he had been told in a peculiar tone of voice, and with a dictatorial air, "that he should not speak." This he considered as an affront offered to him, and destructive of the liberties of the Society ; whose nature even he, attempted to describe : without uttering a syllable to the point in hand.

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The Counsellor, who next rose, defended the President ; said he remembered the circumstance, which in fact stood thus :—No less than three Gentlemen had been up before him ; one of whom in particular three or four times ; whose right of preference was of course indubitable ; and, after all, the words of the President were not, as had been said, “ Sir, you shall not speak ;” but, “ Sir, I cannot at this time hear you.” What a difference the transposition made ! Nay further, he appealed to the feelings of the Gentlemen present, whether it was not ungenerous to attack the President, when he knew he was in the room, but from hoarseness unable to defend himself. Would it not have been more manly to have waited till he was again in the chair ?

Order being thus restored, the debate was opened by a Scotch Clergyman, Preceptor to the children of a noble English Earl. This Gentleman's erudition was far deeper than what characterizes the bulk of his own order. Being now somewhat advanced in years, his judgment was matured, and his fancy corrected, by his having dedicated the whole of his time to mental acquisitions. 'Tis true—he was neither calculated to make a figure in fashionable circles, nor naturally endued with the requisites of an orator. In a word, whatever he said, sufficiently proved its own worth. Every sentence apposite,

site, came fraught with good sense, and sound reasoning: though not delivered in the most gracious manner, or with a pleasing accent. He had been at pains to write a speech, which on a more solemn occasion would have done him honor, and commanded that attention, which here he did not receive.

He set out with observing, that virtue can only be attributed to rational beings, who are in a probationary state—descanted on the other classes of inhabitants, with which this lower world was stocked; pointed out their excellence, and their enjoyments in their several kinds and degrees, withal how humbled, and inferior to man, from the want of intellectual powers! The loveliness of virtue, continued he, next bespeaks its genuine value, and demands our notice. This all ages—professions—and characters united in heightening—or in labouring to persuade others of it. This had been the avowed practice of every celebrated philosopher, whether ancient or modern: the basis of their systems—and the darling theme of almost every lecture. Granting there had been endless diversities of opinion respecting it, the eagerness wherewith each contended for the rectitude of his own, clearly exhibited, at least his idea, of the value and importance of the subject.

He

He sensibly argued through a long train of well-digested moral matters, though much interrupted by groans and coughs from the major part of the audience, till he came to tell us—

The robes of Senators—Judges—and Clergy—are respected as the emblems of virtue, but they give not the reality ; on the contrary, they are beheld with abhorrence, when we believe the wearers of them to be vicious and corrupt. So with regard to the performance of domestic duties. One, may seem a tender husband—an indulgent father—a dutiful son—a generous friend—and an easy master ; after all, none of these would be revered, except the attestations of their being so, were full and convincing. In politics, true allegiance and patriotism can alone serve a nation ; whereas the appearance of them will terminate far short of this object, and in the modes of displaying will doubtless betray themselves.—Finding the Society rather discontented, he somewhat abruptly concluded, by saying, the reality of virtue, was much more likely to procure general estimation, than the appearance.

The second Gentleman, before he came to the point, declared, that during the time the opener of the debate spoke, he thought, instead of the Westminster Forum, where respectable companies

panies assemble for political and entertaining enquiries, he had certainly stumbled into a Presbyterian meeting-house, where he heard a sermon upon virtue and holiness, which would have suited the days of John Knox. He regretted the indefinite terms wherein the question was expressed—only could surmise upon it, that the appearance seemed more likely, though not so fit, to procure general esteem, than the reality. According to custom, he then run off to American measures and the Ministry.

The next Speaker retorted upon him with all the poignancy of satire. He was astonished how the Gentleman could dream of a Presbyterian parson; since he, to whom he alluded, was manifestly deficient in one very essential part of that character, namely, a canting tone; which his opponent so emphatically possessed, that if his appearance did not rather resemble a quack doctor, he should most assuredly have concluded him a Presbyterian. He examined the effects of the simple appearance, and of the reality. For instance—Will the appearance of courage lead a man through every danger, nay to die for King—Country—or relatives?—Will the appearance of chastity preserve the purity of the mind? or prohibit the perversion of otherwise virtuous principles? Will it be equally averse as the reality,

reality, to the seduction of others? Will the appearance of charity visit the sick—cloathe the naked — and feed the hungry? — Or lastly, will the appearance of generosity relieve the indigent, or succour the distressed? In patriotism the case is the same. The specious statesman, who strenuously disputes about rights—privileges—his country—the constitution—and what not—will invariably keep his own particular end in view:—that secured, he will quickly drop the mask, for which he has no farther need.

The subsequent Speaker replied to the above interrogatories, which he called ambiguous in the conclusions drawn from them. A man may do all these things, yet be destitute of every spark of virtue. He quoted many instances from history, where the fairest appearances of goodness, covered the blackest purposes of guilt. Who could deny, that acts of apparent virtue, had frequently paved the way to the tyrant's throne—to the murder of the innocent—and the bed of the adulterer? what is more, to the success of inherent villainy of every kind? We find appearances most scrupulously adhered to, where the reality doth not exist,—merely for the sake of praise or profit. Still it must be allowed, wherever virtue actually dwells, it is respected in proportion to its appearance.

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The fifth Speaker, with his usual humour, informed us of his amazement to find the Ministry lugged into the present question : for, in God's name, what connection was there subsisting between them and virtue ? Might they not have allowed them a little slumber for one evening, while something moral, of course no ways relative to them, exercised our reasoning powers ? Why, Mr. President, need I tell you, Sir, that the cardinal virtues, and a Cardinal's virtues, are very different : nor does the application rest here : it is extended through an almost infinite diversity of characters and situations. As to the terms of the question before us, Sir, they evidently tend to preclude debate, therefore little can with propriety be offered, save that I believe it will be invariably found, that every semblance of virtue, till its fallacy appears, obtains approbation.

He was followed in debate by a Gentleman, who keeping strictly to the terms of the question, said, it must strike universally, that estimation is a reward given by the public, to what it either is, or pretends to be, a competent judge of ; therefore virtue gains estimation by being published, more than by being concealed, though when latent, it may be equal as to its quantum, and the source of numberless joys to the possessor.

In a given number of years; said the next ingenious Speaker, real virtue would eclipse apparent; since every detection would accumulate the odium thrown upon insincerity: and as this scale kicks the beam, the other must preponderate in public estimation. We are also compelled to acknowledge, that Virtue's not enrobing herself with fashionable allurements at first, obliges her to stand back when her shadow is preferred.

Another Gentleman, advanced that Cesar had the semblance of virtue—Cato the reality,—though it was not copied, if it was approved of, because he lived in corrupt days. Cesar, more artful, assumed the garb of virtue agreeable to the times, whereby he met with applause, and over the ruin of his country's liberties rode in triumph.

The Gentleman who spake ninth in the debate, admitted the subtilty of hypocrisy, that its arts were sometimes so exceedingly complicate and specious, as could only be unfolded by deep penetration and length of time. Still this did not happen twice in twenty times: in the other eighteen, the varnish either fell into chinks, through which the truth might be perceived, or it proved too slight to bear examination.

The tenth Speaker, in doleful strains complained of the reigning degeneracy of the times, by means whereof, the tools of vice and folly incessantly

cessantly supplant, the friends of virtue and wisdom.

The purport of all the next in order, urged, is contained in this one sentiment :—We have not many virtuous characters in this country at present, because, as in the days of Cato, it is not fashionable to be so.

The last Speaker contended—that Brutus, Cato, and Cicero, founded their characters upon, and derived their fame from, the reality of virtue; while Cesar, and others of a similar stamp, were only the admiration of the moment, posterity being too well acquainted with them, not to value them exactly according to their demerits.

On the question being put—It was carried in favour of the reality of virtue.

JANUARY 17th, 1780.

Which is detrimental more to the Constitution, — Prerogative, as it stood before the Revolution ; or the Influence of the Crown, as it hath arisen since ?

THIS question, it was said, came from the pen of a Right honourable Earl, who is an honour to his country, and whose firm adherence to the spirit of the constitution, as well as his animated defence of the rights and privileges of his own countrymen, must not only endear him to every Englishman, but also hand down with the brightest lustre, his name to the latest posterity.

Of the Gentleman who handed in the question, we have already spoken in part. The present was a new instance of his attention to the Westminster Forum, of whose prosperity as oft as mention is made, he may justly adopt the words of the Trojan hero, " Et quorum magna pars fui." He had patronized this society in its weak and infant state, consequently deserves the greater praise. The very first night the President took the chair, he genteely complimented him in it, and rendered the compliment of value, by subsequent instances of his sincerity. He had spoken in almost every

Vol. I. M night's

night's debate to the present evening ; and, by way of summing up the applause he received, it is sufficient to inform our readers, that many of the audience have thought there existed a resemblance between his oratory, and that of the Honourable Charles Fox. He shines more in a reply, than in the opening of a question. Possessed of strong natural parts, which he hath omitted no opportunity of cultivating, his speeches are sensible, and very much to the point. He is a rapid Speaker, rather too much so—no doubt owing to his amazing facility of expression. His accent, we confess, is not the most pleasing ; and what seems still more strange, from the moment he begins to speak, he knits his brows, and frowns till he concludes.

With respect to the question itself, none can doubt of its vast importance, especially when brought forward at a time when the people, almost ruined by the undue influence of the Crown, were no longer able to endure it, therefore were awake to the serious consideration, of every means proposed for the diminishing thereof. This we can boldly aver, that no question ever more crowded, with genteel and respectable company, the Westminster Forum : some of the first Peers of the realm, with a number of Members of the House of Commons, besides those, in the very first walks in literature, attended : nor
ever

ever before did we hear there, such an excellence of speeches. Gentlemen of the most distinguished abilities were at pains to prepare themselves. On this occasion we were enraptured with the astonishing eloquence of that famous Hibernian, a student of the Temple, whom even from his speeches at the Forum, many have asserted to be at least equal to his kindred genius, the Great Sublime. Here it becomes us to lament that it is from notes we write—and any thing short of the speeches themselves, is an injury to them, and a loss to us.

The Gentleman who adopted the question, imagined the Influence of the Crown to be infinitely more dangerous, because it proceeds more insidiously than Prerogative ever did. The encroachments of the one, of necessity, were open, consequently when discerned, perhaps previous to their being felt, might be either hindered in the first efforts, or finally and successfully resisted—whereas the other might often accomplish its diabolical ends ere it was perceived, or have acquired such strength, as to render the subversion of it next to an impossibility. In fact, the one was an open, the other a concealed and disguised enemy, each of them inimical to the unalienable rights of mankind, and destructive of civil liberty. The enormity of taxes supplying the Minister with the means of corruption, must un-

questionably give vast influence to the Crown. Nothing inferior to a virtuous Administration could prevent this—and this is what England hath not for some time seen—though none of the foregoing, came up to the present, in wickedness and weakness. If then we ascribe merit to those dauntless souls, who opposed the strides of Prerogative in ancient times, especially during the infamous reigns of the accursed race of Stuarts, we cannot shew cause, why it should be denied to those, who oppose the undue influence of the Crown, at this awful period.

The manners of this country received their first enervation, from the luxury introduced by the dissipated Charles—since which fatal circumstance, it hath spread its contagion every where, and among all ranks of men, to such a degree, that the very structure of British liberty, the test of ages, and envy of the world, now totters on its base. Parliament, once the shield of the people, hath now degenerated into the tool of the Crown, ready to promote and carry whatever impolitic and unjust measure is enjoined by the servants thereof. Owing to similar causes, we may view the declension of Rome. Lucullus, with the very wealth he adorned his Asiatic triumphs, enveloped the seeds of ruin to the Roman grandeur. When these had operated to a given height, ambitious men, Cataline like,

soon found, that provided there was a purchaser, every thing might be bought at Rome. How true the saying of the poet, "*Luxuria sævior armis!*"—The undue influence which her Cæsars exerted, completed that wretchedness, which luxury, and effeminacy of manners had began. Ye Britons! while ye tremble—behold its effects!—simply contrast what she was, with what she now is—the mirror will shew yourselves, and probably reflect that goal to which your infatuation so rapidly whirls you. Once she was the *Domina rerum*; and the first of her Poets, as to the fame of his song, though caressed at a court, and blest with the friendship of the highest characters who flourished there, wished for longævity of repute, no longer than "*Dum Pontifex in Capitolium ascendat.*" Once she gave laws to the world—her Magistrates disdained crowns—her Senators knew all, save vice and folly—her armies dreaded nothing but want of spirit in their foes—nations the most remote, acquiesced voluntarily in the equity of her decisions, and citizens had no interest but that of their Country. What is she now?—Almost unpeopled—without martial prowess, or industry; where every petty Prince rules with a rod of iron—the seat of ecclesiastical bigotry, and of unmanly effeminacy; instead of heroes, she hath not men, but glories in her shame; and

appears pleased to recount the abilities of her opera-dancers, and the virtues of her eunuchs. Mournful catastrophe—would to Heaven not an iota of it applied to Britain!—Kind Providence forbid—that the conclusion should also hold!

The Gentleman who spoke second in the debate, thought Prerogative could not be detrimental to the constitution in the enlightened æra's of society; which he inferred from that very position which the former Speaker had advanced, relative to the House of Stuart; namely, that wherever the principles of liberty existed, it would seldom be found, that they received the deadliest stabs, during the reign of those, the most zealous of Prerogative. Let the House of Tudor witness the truth. None were ever fonder of it than the Kings of that family; yet who could deny, that under their reigns, the constitution, in a variety of instances, gathered strength? If Charles tried to stretch it too far,—his ignominious death shewed how perilous was the attempt.—In the following reign the habeas corpus act received the royal assent, one of the most singular and glorious privileges of an Englishman. James II. tried to enslave his people—a despicable, pusillanimous bigot himself, he meant to lay the lustre of Britain, once more, at the feet of a devilish and tyrannical
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papal throne—an abdication of his own hereditary crown was the unavoidable price he paid for it — another cogent proof that Prerogative is not likely to destroy the public virtue or spirit of the people.

Whereas, since the accession of William and Mary, of dear and illustrious memory, the unconstitutional influence of the Crown has been accumulating strength : arising chiefly, from the civil revenue being then so permanently settled —and from intermediate changes, and vicissitudes in politics, and the characters of statesmen ; whereby bribery and corruption had been formed into a regular artillery against opposition, and been made subservient to the ends of Administration in general. The 42,000 armed men in Ireland, of whom we lately heard so much, and whose number hath received such augmentations since, may be considered as so many convincing proofs, of Prerogative's not being so hurtful, as the influence which could make it requisite, for so loyal a people to arm such numbers, to obtain from Administration a redress of manifest injuries and of complicated wrongs ; which for a series of years they had borne with the meekness of lambs, and more than Stoical patience.

The third Speaker, after a sensible and modest introduction, undertook to describe the effects

effects of Prerogative ; which, through a long series of historical facts, he executed in a masterly manner.

He began with the Government established by the Norman Conqueror. Feudal tenures were then ingrafted upon all landed property, that of course all lands were held, to speak in the jurisprudential stile, mediately of the crown, under as absolute slavery, as a warlike Prince could create.—Need history be ransacked to tell, how far a character of this sort may carry it, or how deplorable the condition of the miserable mortals who are constrained to gratify his pleasure ? Amidst the grievances resulting from this system, none of the smallest came towards the close thereof, which, if it somewhat lessened one part of the burden, added to the weight of the other, and that was, the introduction and exorbitant power of Ecclesiastics. If ever hell lent its peculiar aid to any set of men, to execute the most intolerant, and coercive chains for mankind, the clergy, of the period alluded to, must have been the persons. Who, any way acquainted with the historic page, can hesitate to believe it ? Do we wish to convey the most striking ideas of avarice in its full swing, of oppression in its keenest inflictions, and of the lust of power — the *lubido dominandi*, in its most hideous strides—display them in the
examples

examples left on record, by the church and churchmen: for these, were never surpassed, if equalled. In this horrid æra of Prerogative, assisted by spiritual power, trials by jury were evaded, if not suppressed. The Forest laws restrained every amusement, and manly recreation; than which, nothing could more surely damp the natural vigour, and ardour of Englishmen. What an odious institution was the curfeu or evening bell; whereby people were obliged to put out their fires, and spend the evening in solitary gloom! Under the pretence of guarding against conspiracies, sociality itself, with others of the sweetest pleasures of life, were destroyed. So far from permitting societies for free debate, light was denied, though needed, to fulfil, the various tasks of domestic care.

The liberty of the press, was then also restrained in the most absolute manner. All places of profit were vested in the King's Norman favourites, who were pompous vassals to the Crown, and tyrants to the people. In these uncivilized days the Sovereign kept about him 60,000 Knights, whose vassals were numerous, each moving obedient to his Lord, and their force he directed as he pleased. Commerce at that time could not rear her head—a British fleet was totally unknown. Rufus, in proportion to his abilities, and the time he reigned, proceeded

proceeded in his father's steps. Our Orator went on, in considering the effects of Prerogative, in the reigns of Henry II, and those that followed, till the time of Henry VIII, who strained it excessively; just as his avarice—lust—or caprice, directed him. Mary established Popery, and what may be named slavery. A bigot to the Church of Rome; she sacrificed the dearest interests of her people, to what she apprehended, would conduce to the confirmation of its power, nor hesitated about the legality of the means she adopted for that end. Queen Elizabeth, notwithstanding all her specious pretexts, and her successful way of disguising her real designs, aided by some of the wisest Statesmen, and greatest Ministers, that ever surrounded the throne of Britain, retained her Star Chamber, which could be viewed only as a sort of veiled inquisition, with all the other pageantry of Prerogative, which must have been peculiarly detrimental previous to the Revolution. The Influence of the Crown he attributed wholly to the corruption of the people. Their spirit seemed gone, while their characters had undergone an entire change. Formerly they would have fought for their liberty, now they tamely renounce it; what is more, they aid the very hands which in the face of day are uplifted to murder it. In the name of Heaven, why keep
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the motto—*Nemo me impune lacessat*, when almost every ass, with perfect safety, may tofs his heels in the face of the British Lion? Why glory in our constitution, when not a mean sycophant, who by duplicity and fraud can force his way into places of power, that needs fear punishment, however daring his infringements upon its most valuable principles? While the world admires the happy mixture of the three branches of our legislature, how must they drop the involuntary tear, to perceive the presages of its dissolution, in the enormous and undue influence of the Crown!

He who favoured us with the question, spoke fourth in the debate. He fixed afresh the attention of the company, by prefacing the importance of it, and describing the points where it touched the interests of every individual, high or low, rich or poor. No Briton with his eyes open could say—This concerns not me. The times said he, Mr. President, demand we should be active, be strong, and quit ourselves like men, in working out our own political salvation. Why, Sir, should Gentlemen go so far back in our history, as the Norman Conquest. It is altogether unnecessary, for the elucidation of the matter in hand. Let us confine our remarks to the four last reigns preceding the Revolution, during which, liberty was somewhat understood.

understood. These were like the spring, before the summer, of civil rights being properly ascertained. There the bud began to expand into an attractive blossom. While we descant on such a subject, this position we deduce as matter of absolute fact—that Kings can have no Prerogative, but what is for the good of the people; nor can it be illegal or unconstitutional to strip them of whatever degree thereof; that relates not to the acquisition of that end. But, Sir, let us minutely inspect the effects of Prerogative, in the reign immediately before the Revolution, when the acts of Prerogative had extended wide, and like a rapid torrent swept all before it—then it even dared to set aside law; to quote the number of instances must surely, before this respectable Society, and to you, Mr. President, be needless; but in those periods it was never exerted, save when opposed by the people.

Direful as Prerogative appeared, it nevertheless did not equal the pernicious fruits of the Influence of the Crown. Here our imaginations may be warmed, by a recollection of the much-praised allegory, of the glorious and immortal Chatham, who compared the constitution of this country to a tower—Prerogative attacked it openly, whereas the Influence of the Crown resembled a mine unseen, gradual, and well disguised,

guised, but sure in its operations, and fatal in its effects. Since the above venerable character has been mentioned, indulge me with quoting his comparison of an Englishman's house to a castle. — The hut of the poorest peasant, the King himself dare not now force; though there was a time, when nothing was exempt from his pleasure; and, to complete the insecurity of both person, and property; his subordinate officers might tear open the most private concealments, seize every effect, then confine to a prison the late possessor. Now a lock cannot be forced, but at the risque of his life who doth it. Still Prerogative, was not even then so detrimental to the constitution, as the Influence of the Crown at present, of which the Parliament is the keystone.—I say, Sir, the idea started by a very ingenious and learned Gentleman, who has gone before me, about the people's being the source of corruption, is not just, nor can it be proved from facts. The influence whereof we complain, took root at the Revolution, and hath ever since been diffusing itself, so that now, there is not a corner of the empire to be found, where its fibres have not penetrated. Revenue hath also been noticed: if the nature and effects of this, both before and after the Revolution, be closely inquired into, the result will be a confirmation of the foregoing facts.

The fifth Speaker observed—That as Prerogative cured itself, that is, went such lengths as hastened its own destruction, so will the Influence of the Crown, provided we patiently wait the fullness of time. Amazing are the discoveries, made by experience. Warm Prerogative Princes were a pack of fools, compared with what modern examples teach—they contended with parliaments about standing armies, &c., but in these halcyon days of political knowledge, secure parliaments, and they get standing armies, with whatever else they please, into the bargain. It must be owned, under the reign of a pious P—— like ours, there's nothing to fear from Prerogative, or from the Influence of the Crown, which indubitably by his consummate skill in the arts of government, having imbibed from his favourite preceptor tenets the most friendly to liberty—also from his natural wisdom and gentleness of manners—he will certainly employ, merely for enhancing the public glory and happiness. May we ever be thankful for our privileges, and make a proper improvement of them! But as a wise and prudent people, ought we to rest satisfied with this?—Ought we to do nothing more? Most certainly; our concern for our posterity ought to be our next and highest care. Grant, we dread no injury from prerogative, Dare we say as
much

much for ages to come? Is there a possibility of their being wretched from the strides of prerogative? be it then ours to watch its every operation; that so liberty in the most pure and extensive sense, may be transmitted to latest posterity. If in some distant period, amidst the ordinary vicissitudes of human affairs, a bad man should hold the sceptre, in whose court, and in whose estimation public services might be neglected, and real abilities no recommendation, but private interest and dark intrigue equivalent to any thing; perhaps the unhappy subjects might then complain in vain.

Much has been said about revenue.—True, we don't pay Peter's pence—but we are not the gainers, who pay N——s pounds. In a word, wherever ministerial puppets may play, whether at St. James's, St. Stephen's, or at a Shaftesbury election, it holds good, that the people of this country invariably pay the music.

The sixth Gentleman who mingled in the debate, imagined the former Speakers were wrong in talking about the constitution, which was not known till the Revolution. We grant an influence to be necessary; but when it goes beyond certain bounds, and becomes almost irresistible, it then is highly dangerous to the liberties of the subject. Public veneration—the prop

of power, without which the banner of authority would sully, and the arm of the magistrate be enfeebled—depends more on the form, than the substance; while the form is preserved, the people sleep on and take their rest. Allow the clouds to gather—the storm to impend—they indolently argue, who knows whether it mayn't blow over?—With difficulty they are kindled to action. Thus a building may be weakened in its foundation, rotten in the roof, decayed in its timbers, and cracked in the walls; yet have a specious front, by which if the spectator is contented to judge, he will be induced to think well of it: and should he purchase, experience will tell him how grossly he was deceived by appearances. Rome lost her liberty by delusion—by similar causes has the once-envied firmness and manly strength of the British constitution been enervated. Ye Britons—who still have virtue enough to stem corruption's venal tide—by the duty you owe to your forefathers, who at the price of blood bequeathed to you the fair inheritance; by the regard due to yourselves—your children—and posterity at large—arouse yourselves—come forth—seize the betrayers of public confidence—place upright men at the helm—shew your S——n his real friends—and salvation from impending ruin, will crown your endeavours,

endeavours, founded on the constitution, and guided by its direction.

The subsequent Speaker apprehended the power of Prerogative was connected with religion. Enveloped in the mantle which this at one time threw round them, Kings were beheld as Demigods. No sooner did science unveil this, than we saw them simply as the first magistrates of the people. Fortified by *Jure Divino*, and Passive Obedience, they looked like the *sanctum sanctorum*, into which whoever entered, must put their hands upon their mouths, and lay themselves in the dust before the majesty of their presence. To good sense and philosophy, we owe the demolition of this tinsel grandeur. Kings, we now find, are but men, and derive their authority from the consent of the governed, by whom their power is upheld. Their brightest lustre keeps pace, with the prosperity and happiness of their subjects. No longer we approach them like slaves—we venture to reason with them, and in this country are able to tell them—there is a something to which, even they must bend, and to which they are amenable—viz. the constitution. The powers of Prerogative may be compared to a violent disease, which often went to such extremities, that to preserve health and save life, a principal member must be amputated.

The next Speaker argued in favour of the Influence of the Crown, contending, that the kingly Prerogative, was vastly more dangerous before the Revolution. The varnish, Mr. President, of popularity is indeed highly coloured, therefore to declaim on that side readily gains applause; yet the dispassionate breast, may deign assent to the belief of integrity's having a seat in our parliaments—they are the palladium of liberty, let sham patriots, or factious men say what they will. Till these arrive at a flagrant and insupportable degree of venality and servility to the Crown; the people are not at liberty to refuse submission to their decrees; or take steps to dissolve the connection. Subsisits there an analogy between the above remarks, and the state of the nation at present? Let us reflect what Britain was 20 years ago—the honour of Europe—the arbiter thereof—and the crusher of Bourbon ambition: her fleets swept the seas—her standard, victorious, stood in every part of the world—her commerce universal—and her subjects enriched. Alas! how are the mighty fallen! What is she now? While the pencil of truth draws the picture, let imagination, nay, let shame, drop the curtain, and if but for a moment, hide our distress!

The ninth and last Speaker owed his being heard, to the indulgence of the Society, the
hours

hours of debate being ended. He blamed some of the former Speakers for their too loose mode of talking concerning Majesty; especially found fault with him who had harangued the Society about amputation—he insisted on the seditious tendency of such speeches, and recommended decorum and propriety at all times, peculiarly when our gracious and amiable Sovereign was either actually named, or more remotely alluded to. His numerous family, like so many pillars supporting the British throne, gave the fairest prospects to this country, of the continuance of our civil and religious liberties. The income of the Crown, justly weighed, is not greater now than previous to the Revolution; after all—what lover of the welfare of his country would take any pleasure, in refusing a revenue adequate to the dignity of the Crown of Great Britain? Destroy the legislative authority, and our boasted liberty would sink into licentiousness, or wildest uproar. With respect to the corruption of the people, and bribery of parliaments, let me only ask, who votes away our money?—the very representatives of the people, chosen from among themselves. In a word, the Influence of the Crown, as it hath arisen since the Revolution, he thought far more detrimental to the constitution, than the Pretogative as it stood before.

At this time, a Gentleman proposed to adjourn the question, which was unanimously agreed to : therefore it was adjourned—till

J A N U A R Y 24th, 1780.

AFTER the debate closed last Monday evening, a worthy Cleric informed the President, that he sat hard by a Gentleman, who inveighed bitterly against him, for not attending to his having thrice rose to speak : and went away protesting, he would openly attack him for the affront ; which he conceived designed for himself in particular. The President solemnly declared he did not see him rise ; nor believed any person addressed him, to whom he did not attend ; conscious of his impartiality, he would ever be superior to what prejudice or mistake alledged to the contrary. But guess his surprize—on the Gentleman's being described to him, (for to this moment, he is otherwise unknown) to find it was the very person, who had ungenerously attacked him, the evening his indisposition prevented his keeping the chair ; and whom, if ever an opportunity offered, the President meant to have severely reprimanded. The present information disposed him to relinquish all thoughts of this sort—and further,
prompted

prompted him to prevent the threatened interruption, by saying something pertinent, previous to his reading the question ; which he did, to the following effect :—

Gentlemen,

Persuaded that the main end of your assembling here, is either entertainment, or instruction ; and that nothing offends you more, than what obstructs these ; be pleased to indulge me in a few words, intended to preserve that order and decorum, so essential thereto. Being made acquainted, by a much-esteemed friend—that a Gentleman who rose to speak last Monday evening, felt himself exceedingly hurt, at his not having an audience granted him, which he attributed to partiality in me : I think it incumbent upon me, to satisfy him, and save your time, by declaring upon my honour, before this respectable company, that I neither saw nor heard him, therefore, what he imputes to design, must solely be ascribed to chance. It is evident, that Gentlemen may rise, in many parts of this assembly, undiscerned by me, unless they also make themselves be heard : wherefore, to prevent confusion, I earnestly intreat of Speakers, to address me in an audible tone the moment they rise, whereby the audience, together with me,

would be enabled, to determine instantaneously, who had the prior right of speaking.

The above was favourably heard—and the question was then read.

It may not be amiss now to inform our readers, that the Forum had acquired such estimation in the opinion of the public, and so much the ~~son~~ was it to frequent it, that, on adjourned questions especially, Gentlemen came prepared, and from well-adjusted notes delivered elegant pieces of composition. To abridge such speeches is assuredly to injure them. Granting we had wrote short-hand, to have published them at large would have far exceeded the limits of the present design, besides obliged us, from politeness, to ask the consent of the respective Speakers, not a few of whom, there is reason to think, would have refused.

Four Speakers deservedly engrossed two hours; each speaking an half hour: to which number the opener of the debate did not belong, though he by no means wandered from the point:—but with a deal of ingenuity replied to the idea of Chatham's tower, which by a very eloquent Gentleman had been so warmly insisted on during the former debate; by way of weakening the inferences drawn from it, he quoted the sentiments of the celebrated Lolme, which on this

head

head seemed to imply just the reverse. The constitution he compared to a ship; parliament represented the waters, which if withdrawn, the ship cannot swim, no more than the constitution can be in vigour, if the hands of Parliaments are weakened, or improperly supported. Something rather disrespectful to sailors was dropt in this allusion, which a navy Captain present, with a blunt though honest warmth, immediately refuted in two or three words.

The Speaker then went on. Much has been said about the power of the Crown in the Legislature; but is there a person, Mr. President, in this respectable Society, so ignorant, as not to know that the Royal assent is little more than a form? It is given to acts that have gone through such and such regular stages of public enquiry; without ever having been seen by Majesty. To withhold that assent, upon the purport or title of the bill being read, would at this day, be a novelty indeed. In all governments there are places of profit; it is absolutely expedient there should be such; and that they may be abused, and converted into instruments of seduction from public virtue, we do not deny; nay, that it hath happened in an excessive degree, we acknowledge; while at the same time we believe, Prerogative to have been far more pernicious before the Revolution, than the Influence so aggrandized, and exclaimed against, by

those on the other side of the question. Do they call for proofs?—When did the Star-chamber exist? or what's the period in our history, that martial law did most arbitrarily domineer; from which nothing was secure, and against which nothing could guard? Had a question of this nature excited public attention in the days of Queen Elizabeth or James I, need we hesitate about the light it would have been viewed in, or the decision it would have received?

It was the Gentleman who now spoke, to whom the President alluded, in the apology made before the commencement of the debate, and this was the time already hinted at, when he met with the applause of the Society; owing to this circumstance, that he intermingled his argument with a number of odd expressions, and eccentric similies.

Prerogative, Mr. President, never proved so detrimental to the constitution, before the glorious æra of the Revolution, as the Influence of the Crown hath been since. Where shall I begin in the illustration? Permit me to exclaim—How important the question! One more so, never exercised the faculties of Britons. Who can stand firm under its weight? To discuss it properly, would require the wind of a Fabius, and the lungs of a Stentor. Cursed Prerogative!—Would I could express the thorough detestation

tion I have of it!—Frequently have I thought, in the perusal of history, as well as of our inimitable Shakespeare, that Hamlet's Ghost never existed, save in the breast of tyrants. We have been told of the grievance of the Curfeu, along with other such stretches of despotism; for in some cases, that and Prerogative are synonymous terms, yet taken in the aggregate, and compared with the thousands of ills, flowing from the undue Influence of the Crown, bore no greater similitude, than the ringing of a brass candlestick to the great Tom of Lincoln.

Once indeed this country's glory and felicity rested upon, and was interwoven with, the pure and hallowed principles of liberty. Then her Kings were Patriots—her Statesmen honest—her Bishops were Divines—her Warriors undaunted and successful—her Elections free—her Senators men of integrity—her Judges were friends to the civil and religious liberties—and her Sons industrious, contented, and happy. Ye who are skilled in the darkest shades, contrast it with the present picture. Now the substance of liberty—the reality of virtue—have winged their way to other climes—and left nothing save the fainter shadow, on our western hills. To complete the wretched scene—valuable objects are desired, after the best and wisest means of securing them, no more exist. And I will maintain

tain my Prerogative—said a certain little somebody, when every such effort proved matter of derision to millions, and, if we may judge from the consequences, carried flagrant marks of Heaven's displeasure on them. Should it be urged, that the Influence we arraign originates from Prerogative—can this palliate the excess of the former? The people have their faults: Does this imply that Ministers are pure? Can the errors of the one expiate the accumulated guilt of the other? How absurd the notion! No! Ministers must be born again, ere they can atone, for one of the least of many thousand transgressions, cruelly, and wantonly, committed against the spirit of the constitution, and the rights of Englishmen. Were these Purse-hounds to tax our wives and mistresses, so tame is the British spirit grown, that I really imagine it would be suffered with impunity.

Mr. President, some Gentlemen, frequenters of this place, pique themselves upon the knack of story-telling. Please listen to mine. Blithful Johnny married Maggy, the daughter of Willie Graham. Though their fortunes were nae great, yet they had gude blude in their veins, were cum of auld families, and had some bra sowks related to them. After bearing several hardships, especially, no sma part of hunger, at last the parochial bone came round. Johnny, transported

transported at the sight, rubbed his sides, and licked his lips, to think what bra slices of fat beef had once been on't, and muttered sum curses gainst them wha had pickt it sae bare. Howe'er he was forced to mak the maist o't, when happening to step backwards to his kail-yard, he saw a large ugly he-goat browzing on his cabbages, and what grieved him warst of a', was to see him tear up, or break them he cou'd nae eat. The muckle-horn'd dee'l split your sides, quoth he, I might hae excused your ain garbling, gin ye had but left some sprouts for the bairns; wi that he flew at him like a fury. Gentlemen laugh at my story—perhaps at my mixing Scotch and English—but it is not a laughing matter; for if the small remains of English virtue do not fly at the Ministerial he-goats of the present day, who, disdaining Scotch cabbage, have spoiled the choicest English vines, there will be nothing left for posterity, and fatal experience will convince us, that present Influence is more dangerous than Prerogative.

The Gentleman who rose third, was a student of Lincoln's-Inn, who gave strong indications of his being one day an honour to the bar, both from his knowledge—his accuracy—and his oratory. From principle he defended Administration. Those honoured with his acquaintance never doubted his sincerity. What chiefly characterized

characterized him at the Forum, was his becoming diffidence, so graceful to his youth—his attention to the laws of the society—and to the decorum of debate. He generally argued from historical facts, or great law-authorities, whereby his reasoning came powerfully recommended. The obligations the Forum lay under to him, were the deeper and more peculiar, in his being, for several evenings, the only Gentleman who invariably supported the present measures, consequently animated the argument, by creating an opposition. Now he spoke to this import:—

Mr. President, I said in the course of last night's debate, the forest-laws, with the being obliged to put out fire and candle at a given hour, whenever the abhorred Curfew tolled the signal, were grievances: nor do I alter the appellation, notwithstanding their having been rather derided this evening, by a very pleasant Gentleman: for, Sir, I never thought, much less said, they were either the greatest, or the only ones. It is unquestionably politic in my opponent, to select the most inconsiderable of those burdens which lay so oppressive on the shoulders of our fore-fathers, previous to the Revolution; after all, in my opinion, they are at least equal to the masterly figure of his rhetoric, (viz.) the notion of the he-goat, under which he has depicted the Minister, so much to the satisfaction of

of the audience, if we may judge from the applause bestowed on him.

But to resume the subject before us. I still do think that Prerogative grew in stature, whereby the blossoms of liberty were blasted; while its own diabolical chains increased in weight and length, from the Norman conquest to the Revolution. As Revenue increased, so did the ability of exercising Prerogative. Nor do I yet see cause, from all that my very ingenious and learned opponents have adduced, to change my sentiments, concerning the wretchedness of Britons, being far greater under such a task-master as Prerogative, than what can with propriety be imputed to the Influence of the Crown, since the Revolution. 'Tis not the Influence so declaimed against by modern Patriots (who much resemble those mentioned by Sir Robert Walpole, that sprang like mushrooms, by thousands in a night) to which the present evils are to be charged. No, Sir, the *primum mobile* is more widely disseminated, and lies much deeper, even in the profligacy and servility of the people: and will any votary of Science, acquainted with the history of mankind, rise up in this assembly, and say, that freedom can be preserved without virtue? Let him name the people, among whom such a phenomenon happened, and tell

us the historic page, where the proofs may be gathered.

Greece and Rome lost their virtue before they lost their liberty. Look into the morals of the capital states of the former, ere a Philip dreamt of enslaving them. And does the historian remark, that *omnia venalia Roma*, ere Cataline formed his conspiracy, or Cæsar rivetted his usurpation on the ruins of his country's liberties? The immortal Bolingbroke's idea, of the fall of states being chiefly owing to luxury, is a kind of corollary to our tenet. In the Roman history, examine the manners of the people, when a Nero, a Caligula reigned, or a Messalina, and an Agrippina, directed the councils of the empire. Into a similar situation must Britons fall, if they suffer men void of principle to guide the affairs of the realm:—should this now, or ever, be the case, it will follow, that not the Influence of the Crown, but that resulting from the degeneracy and corruption of the people, must be viewed, by all cool, dispassionate men, as the sole source of all our woes.

He was followed by that Prince of Orators, the soundness of whose judgment, and the sublimity of whose ideas, can only be equalled by the richness of his own fancy, the fitness of his epithets, and the elegance of his stile. Affraid

of

of trusting to imperfect notes, taken during the delivery; or to our memory, that though good, may be treacherous or insufficient; we might be tempted to pass over the speeches of this Gentleman. In this case we would injure our own feelings, since the fewer the excerpts we possess are, the sorrier should we be to lose them. On this occasion he appeared master of the subject, and shewed the pains he had taken to prepare himself for it, by traversing through systems of jurisprudence, and numbers of law-authorities, for the evidence he gave. Our studies having had a different direction, we are the more disqualified to pursue him through that Dædalian labyrinth.

In his opinion—both of the points in question have been detrimental. He declared himself an avowed enemy to that enormous Influence of the Crown, which had so nearly sapped the very foundations of our constitution: while with equal veracity he announced Prerogative, as it stood before the Revolution, to be much more inimical to the spirit of liberty; the daring exertions whereof, had exceedingly more blasted, the fairest, and noblest blossoms of Britannia's soil. We grant, continued he, the direful effects of the Influence of the Crown, for some years past, has overclouded every thing of the kind in remoter periods, and gone most extraordinary lengths.

lengths. It hath martyred the virtue of Parliaments—dazzled the understanding of Judges—obscured the divinity of Bishops—and subverted the integrity of the generality of men. Not simply to courts—to camps—to honours—to offices—or the domes of magnificence, hath it confined itself. Quick as the rays of light, and secret as the electric fire, it hath pervaded the utmost extremities of the empire—hath pierced the deepest gloom—glanced along the winding vale of rural retirement—attracted the Philosopher—and made the Cleric more zealous in promoting the intrigues of the Cabinet, than the interests of Heaven. We need only attend an election, to perceive that it hath found access to the lowest of the people, and operates from the humblest peasant, through all the various professions and subordinate ranks in life, to the breast of the guilty Lord, under a blazing star.

Mournful as these considerations are, they fall short of those arising in their mind, who seriously contemplate the effects of Prerogative before the Revolution. Then the state resembled a discordant caravan, each plundering his neighbour, or liable to be plundered by him—no fixed barrier against injury, or absolute security in property ! 'Twas the Chaos, whence our glorious Constitution rose !—

Here

Here our Lawyer examined the reigns of Elizabeth and James I, minutely, quoted largely from Sir John Davies, Coke, Blackstone, and others, shewing what dreadful abuses had been made of convocations—how Sovereigns, when it stood in the way of their iniquitous purposes, as it were, annihilated justice—demanded subsidies in the most arbitrary manner, and haughtily trod on the dearest rights of Englishmen. Then loans were extorted, not granted, and, oh strange to tell! prelatical power did not blush, to employ torture itself, in order to wring the scanty pittance from the hand of penury, to supply the lusts, or satiate the avarice of the venal dependent, or courtly spaniel. What was earned with the view of procuring subsistence to smiling infants, the *speciem gregis*, was thrown into the sewer of vice and prodigality. For these, added to similar reasons, he conceived Influence dangerous, though in an inferior degree, to the detriment occasioned by Prerogative, as it stood before the Revolution.

A very sensible Gentleman, well-known as a Speaker at such Societies, now for the first time entertained the company at the Forum, and occupied their attention near half an hour, during which time he uttered many judicious strictures upon the question. This Gentleman was remarkable for the pleasing softness of his

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elocution, and for his generally new stating the question, or placing it in a different view from what other Speakers placed it in. This evening he verified the observation, and delivered his sentiments, in the form of a dialogue between himself, and his friend, whom he represented as an old experienced Gentleman, whose opinion he took in most difficulties. He told us, that both of them had attended the Forum, the former night, when this question was agitated; that he himself had been converted, and used his endeavours to persuade his friend, who also informed him, of the effect, which the reasoning of that evening, had produced upon him. We own the dialogue to have been ingenious, yet by no means equally clear, as appeared to be his own fear; else why have told us, so often as he did, who it was that spoke. Dialogue, justly supported, needs no such aid. We shall therefore pass it over.

The subsequent Speaker offered a few scattered observations, neither touching the merits of the question, nor much worthy of notice, the substance of all he said being contained in this trite remark—That as we ripened in science, so did our ideas of liberty.

The Gentleman who favoured us with the question, deeply regretted there had been a period, when Kings rioted in the blood of their subjects,

subjects, nor valued, what the pleasing their whimsical caprice cost their people. True, they were wont in the most wanton manner to dispense with law; but how oft did they lose their end, and, as an ingenious Gentleman had said, during the former agitation of this question, sometimes paid for the attempt with their lives, and sometimes with their crowns. How seldom did Prerogative invade, without meeting with a firm opposition from the nation at large, or those parts of it, that were peculiarly aggrieved? Whereas times are changed, and we are changed with them. Influence now can do every thing. A thousand private springs move at its command, and operate in as many unseen, but certainly successful modes. Before the Revolution, Judges depended on the Crown, injury then could only be individually felt. Since the Revolution, individuals, we own, are free, but then, as a nation, we are in danger. Parliaments are the piquette guard; if these are bribed, or should some golden-winged Mercury, shake his somniferous rod over them, what security have the people, for the conservation of their rights? When evident marks of the above are discerned, trembling must seize every heart: such consternation may terminate in resentment, and when once aroused, who shall dare to limit the vengeance of insulted Englishmen?—

At any rate, the cunning of the serpent is more to be dreaded, than the valour of the lion. The characteristic of the one is honor—but of the other, it is deceit. The inference is plain. When Gentlemen charge the whole guilt of what we arraign, upon the luxury of the age, and the corruption of the people, they ought to have refuted our former position—that it is not inherent in them, but introduced by the Nabobs of the East and West, whose amazing wealth, doth not always bear the stamp of honesty. If these Gentlemen find it difficult to bias counties or free cities, they are not much embarrassed in the purchase of boroughs; where the electors being comparatively few, are the easier secured. Let us therefore ardently pray, that next election may return honest men, superior to, and unswayed by this undue Influence; by whose upright endeavours, its growth will be checked, if the root cannot be meliorated.

The question being put—It was carried by a great Majority—Against the Influence of the Crown.

JANUARY

JANUARY 31st, 1780.

Are the present County Meetings likely to produce any salutary effects?

THIS question came from an Attorney, who took a pleasure in attending the Westminster Forum: and had wrote the dialogue between a Great Personage and Pinchey, which hath been already noticed. This Gentleman was a great stickler for order, and several times stood forth in the defence of it in the Society. When the question was first proposed, the terms were objected to, as indefinite; which disposed the President to alter them a little, without deviating from their scope and design.

Yet the Author exposed his own question to a foundling's destiny: and the Gentleman who took up the bantling, thought it scarce worth the expence of rearing: since, from the nature of the subject, it did not admit even the shadow of a doubt, and declared he should be surpris'd, if he heard much arguing on the matter. Till he saw it advertised in the public papers, he could not have dreamt, that an assembly of Englishmen, in the present alarming crisis, would have supposed it, to be a question; since,

if ever there was a period, when it was the indispensable duty of the people to remonstrate with Administration; and invoke some better men, than the present class of Ministers, to aid the affairs of the falling Empire, this was the moment. Whilst Ministers are damning our credit, and hurling us to destruction, when shall we vociferate with any hope of redress, if not previous to our arriving at the precipice; but we already stand on the brink, wherefore our endeavours to save ourselves, and provide for posterity, ought to be the more animated and firm. Objections, 'tis true, have been made to these petitions. Does this detract from their merit? The best things upon earth, have not been universally received; few proposals, however beneficial to mankind, but what met with some opposition, nor hath it been possible, to frame any not liable to it.

It hath been likewise said—These petitions come at a time, when the nation is in danger, beset with many inveterate and powerful enemies both at home and abroad, and seem calculated to weaken the sinews of Government, which, in such a situation, every lover of his country ought rather to cherish and strengthen, that the storm may be averted, and due vengeance inflicted on Bourbon ambition and perfidy. This objection, Mr. President, is more specious

specious than solid. For, Sir, who brought the nation into danger?—the very men obnoxious to the community at large, whose ignorance requires at this day no proof, whose blunders all Europe laughs at, and whose incapacity their own minions (for friends such men can never have) pretend neither to deny nor palliate; and whom, one great object of these petitions, is, to get removed, from places, they are manifestly so incompetent to fill. 'Tis because we are lovers of our King and Country, that we so unanimously concur in petitioning; being fully assured, the most probable means of wiping away our national disgrace, and of restoring our commerce and our glory, are to lop off all unnecessary places, and scandalous pensions. Acquainted with no better way of bringing back integrity to the senate, than by confining the public money to its destined ends; and curtailing the present extravagant, not to say unjust, expenditure of it; our view is, to oblige the Minister to have at least the appearance of honesty, by depriving him of the means of being directly the reverse.

Much in conversation, and in the public papers, hath been cogently urged, about strengthening the hands of Administration. Let us first put the question of Diogenes to Alexander—Are ye good or bad? If bad—then, in the name of

Heaven, shall we strengthen their hands!—who will plead for it? Sure no independent Briton!—No virtuous breast can think, much less call them honest. Rather try them by the laws of an injured constitution, fix their heads where they should be, and write underneath—These were destroyers of liberty, and public virtue.

Long ago, have Englishmen reprobated the hellish doctrines of passive obedience, and non-resistance; and shall we be mute, when our very existence as a nation much longer is dubious? The mode of petitioning we affirm, Sir, is legal, otherwise the two Houses of Parliament would have objected to the irregularity, as soon as the subject had been broached there. Every man should, to the utmost of his power, contribute to the success of the scheme proposed: and as to the execution of it, Mr. President, I conclude by observing, the equity of taxing the most, what can bear it the best; in pursuance of which maxim, the first objects presenting themselves, surely are, exorbitant pensions, and useless places.

The second Speaker, with his usual ingenuity and accuracy, on the side of Administration, maintained, that these kinds of County Meetings, were both unconstitutional and illegal. Denied they could be justified, either by the tenets laid down in Magna Charta, or in Confirmatione

Chartarum.

Chartarum. He questioned the ends so gaudily displayed by the former Speaker ; namely, the decreasing of placemen, and the diminishing of sinecures ; being more inclined to believe, they originated from selfishness, prompting them to hope the vacancies, occasioned by the dismissal of the present Ministers, should be supplied by them or their friends. Calamities there are, no doubt, in the empire ; but, Mr. President, I deny there exists such intolerable grievances as sham patriots paint in such terrifying colours : and with regard to calamities, they cannot, be what they may, lay entirely at the door of Administration, seeing at best they could only plan. The execution had not been equal to the design. Some great names might be quoted, the most zealous advocates for whose honour, durst not stand up in this, or any other assembly of the nation, and prove they had done their utmost. The so-much-celebrated Minority themselves, had not been invariably in the right. Wherefore, Sir, it is my humble-opinion, that the real end of these petitions is not to redress grievances. May they who make the application reap the benefit of it—many petitions were presented to Charles, by the very people, who if they did not assist, yet did not oppose the taking off his head.

He who followed in the debate, remarked, that the question secluded the notion of making proselytes,

profelytes, consequently the less said on either side the better. Power is unquestionably lawful. That of the Crown is not fortuitous or assumed, but supported by the laws of the land. Civil society hath ever been compared to a compact, which implies reciprocal obedience and protection. Our glorious constitution is a refinement upon, or rather a perfection of that compact, which, while it fully secures the rights of the Crown, amply provides for the liberty of the Subject. The most venal pen, or tongue, dare not deny the right a Briton hath to complain, and if he pleases, even personally to tell his wrongs to his Sovereign.

It had been enacted in former times, that the assembling of more than three persons, with a view to subvert the laws of the land, was unlawful. This does not in any shape apply to the case before us. Subsequent statutes have confirmed the right, which the people have to petition. Revert to the affairs of 1640, with other periods in our history, and meetings like those now held, or holding, will not be found so novel. When the imposition of Ship-Money was attempted, the petitions presented against it were so pertinent; and from classes of men so respectable, as made the Monarch himself to tremble on his throne.

With relation to present times—Is there, Sir, a countenance bronzed enough to deny, that our

State

State Palinurus nods at the helm?—a national bankruptcy is dreaded; we are insulted abroad—and despised at home—and shall those faithful watchmen for Britannia's weal be blamed, who blow the trumpet of alarm! or who labour to awaken the people of England, since Scotland sleeps in the lap of Ministry, to a sense of their danger, and a vigorous defence of the little—ah little! that remains?

The Gentleman who rose the fourth, said, This was the time to speak, if ever, when bad men, of turbulent spirits, disappointed in their lawless hopes, or iniquitous machinations, preferred the gratification of their own passions to the welfare of the community. Men of this cast valued not what it cost, provided they could clog Administration, and embarrass their measures. In this light he viewed the County Meetings, and the congregate movers of these petitions. Dare the most patriotic declaimers, avow the policy of shewing to our enemies, dissensions among ourselves, with the extremities to which some wish to carry them? I venture, Mr. President, to prophesy, this only, will be the result of these Petitions,

Besides, in the County Meetings, as far as they have been held, none but party-men appear. Did Gentlemen of unbiassed principles, and of independent fortunes, come forward, and arrange themselves

themselves under that standard, then some good effects might be expected. This held good in the case of the Yorkshire Meeting, which claimed the honour,—in God's name let them have it—of leading the van in this party-business : since it could be proved, nothing like a majority of the Independent Freeholders of the county, appeared at that Meeting.

Mr. President, I do believe these Meetings are illegal. I think a learned Gentleman in the law, this evening, hath fully proved the point. After all, they are not general : seeing several counties have refused. What consequences have ensued from the refusal ? The lesser part of the counties, intent on blowing the coal, if they failed in raising a flame, met of themselves, -and, like sons of sedition, did all they could to inflame the minds of the people. In fine, let these Meetings hold what language they please, I shall remain of opinion, Sir, that representatives are not inflexibly bound to speak the voice of their constituents ; wherefore, I trust that Parliament, in the spirit of their wonted wisdom, shall reject these Petitions.

The subsequent Speaker recurred in a great measure to the subject of the preceding evening ; harangued, on the undue Influence which the Crown had acquired, by means of the embezzlement of the public money, and urged, that
wherever

wherever things of this nature went such lengths as they have lately done, petitions must, and will arise. I affirm, Mr. President, the present Influence of the Crown is enormous; it even staggers under its own weight—the staff which supports it, is the number of sinecure places; many of them were formerly efficient, but had grown into disuse; and there were some now, whose use would be very burthensome and oppressive.

Despotism, Sir, must go farther than oppression, ere it can promise to itself security, or stop the language of complaint. Were we to form our notions from what hath fallen from the last Speaker, only party-men are concerned; than which, nothing can be more fallacious; as will appear from the genuine characters of those who have most distinguished themselves in the business: to which hath been added, another assertion, equally wide of the truth; viz. that the view of profits and honours internally actuates the movers of the petitions. Can it, Sir, be profits, and divers species of emoluments, the petitioners have in their eye, when the very substance of all the petitions hitherto framed, went to the abolishing the exorbitancy of these? Can a man, possessed of common sense, be supposed eager, after that which he laboured to destroy.

stroy. The very objection carried its own confutation in its bosom.

The Gentleman who spoke next, never failed to please by his inexhaustible fund of humour, and vivacity. He introduced himself to our attention, by asking a question, Who was the first remonstrator? Why, Balaam's ass, to be sure, is the oldest we read of!—In what terms, that long-eared Gentleman couched his petition, history doth not minutely inform us; but we learn he pressed the argument so closely, that he obtained more, than I am afraid our nation will, namely, a full redress of grievances.

The effects of our petitions must however be salutary to a certain degree. They will awaken Englishmen—and ultimately cause Ministers to feel. Instances, blessed be God! are in our history, teaching us, that in times past they found it impossible to escape the resentment of an injured people, even though enrobed with the mantle of regal favour, and furnished with the titles of ancient fame.

Ministers, Procrustes like, have stretched us to their will: however contrary to sound policy the expedient may have been. Our taxes are contrary to equity, and subversive of the maxims of prudence. Like their ancestors, the Egyptian taskmasters, they double their demands, in proportion as they have increased our

Inability

inability to comply with them. Suppose Ministers had a right to shear the sheep—they have done so—but, not satisfied with the wool, they want the skin.

A Gentleman, hath advanced, that in the Meeting at York, there was not a majority of Independent Gentlemen. I beg leave to ask him how many signed the Protest? Need I quote the words of the illustrious Savile on this subject, who declared, in the House of Commons, the other day, that those who had subscribed the Yorkshire Petition, did in fact, enjoy more landed property than all the Members, who ever sat at one time in that House, ever did in their lives. In a word, the mode taken is a good one; if the petitions are heard—'tis good—if not, the people will know, what they have to trust to.

The seventh Speaker confessed the expediency of reducing supernumerary expences, at this truly alarming crisis, and applauded prudent and politic schemes for this purpose, whilst he feared the mode now adopted, might justly be called a bad one. For my part, Sir, I perceive it to be an attack upon the Civil List, which I consider as the patrimony of the King, that ought not on any account to be withheld, nor can be legally diminished. Why did not those advocates, now so strenuous in the cause, attempt it when they themselves were in office? Not a word of it then! Wherefore he compared them to the dog
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in the manger, who, because he could not eat himself, determined the laborious ox should not. This Gentleman concluded by recommending unanimity.

The last Speaker this evening, on the subject, retorted, with some acrimony, upon the Gentleman, who had acted quite consonant to his usual method, of torturing wit, instead of argument; and had declared so great a regard for vox populi, as induced him to advance this very strange position—that if the people call for light, there must be light: which is at best, sacrificing truth for the sake of a bold assertion. Is every thing right the people do? Are they always united? Does their union last long? Whence the spirit of their superior wisdom? In opposition hereto, he rather compared the assembly of the people to a *rudis indigestaque moles*; literally, to a chaos, during the existence of which, darkness reigned, and error prevailed. As to Englishmen in particular, the sea which flows around their island, is not more unsteady than their own minds, nor more liable to be ruffled by the winds of Heaven, than they, by every breath of popular humour.

But are the means now adopted likely, to produce salutary effects? Just the reverse. And partly for this reason—because these County Petitions do not convey the sense of the people, nor could

could be ever be induced to think such enquiries as those called for, were proper in the time of war. When there is peace there will be leisure, and then none can urge any plausible pretext against it. Another Gentleman rose to speak; but the hours of debate being ended—the question was adjourned to—

F E B R U A R Y 7th, 1780.

THE same arguments in a great measure were repeated, that had been uttered in the course of the former debate; wherefore, we shall be rather concise in giving an account of it.

Before the President took the chair, the Gentleman who had wished to speak last Monday night, but was not then heard, begged leave to speak first. On which, immediately after reading the question, the President thus addressed the audience:

Gentlemen,

Perhaps you may remember, that last Monday evening, one Gentleman in particular, rose to speak, whom we did not hear, on account of the time being elapsed. He hath claimed of me, the privilege of speaking first to-night. Not chusing, without consulting you, to

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grant or deny things of this nature, I now submit it to your determination.

The Society complied with his request, and, the better to regulate similar circumstances in times to come, thought it just, that none who had once spoke to a question, should be heard again on it, though in an adjourned state, till all who chose to favour the Society, with their sentiments, should have finished.

The President now called upon the Gentleman alluded to, informing him we were all attention, when thus he said :

Mr. President, it must be owned, that the Devil was the first Professor of Oratory, and, doubtless, had a very apt scholar in the amiable Mrs. Adam, who was too well bred, not to oblige her master, to the utmost of her power. Many good scholars among the sex have appeared since, and not a few masters, among our modern politicians, closely copy the manners of their great prototype. From this I turn my attention to the men of sense in the room, to them I speak, and their approbation I most certainly shall esteem an honour : whereas the hissers, who, incapable of improvement, much more of refuting what they pretend to dislike, I consider them, as the citizens do scavengers, who are of service in removing the filth from the streets, yet of such an appearance
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and character, as sufficiently prevents our coming near them, or harbouring any thing but the most despicable opinion of them.

Much, Sir, hath been said about the legality of the Meetings, which came not properly within the bounds of this debate, not being included in the terms of the question. We do not deny it is a privilege of this country to address—any number above 20 may, among whom there must be three Justices of the peace—or regularly bring the complaint forward, at the quarter sessions. Under these restrictions imposed by our laws, I still am inclined to think, the present County Meetings somewhat illegal.

With regard to the figure of Balaam's Ass, which excited such merriment, and had been so pleasantly received, during the former reasoning on this point, he supposed the compliment was paid to the Ass, not the argument, seeing the first might be discerned, while the other was truly invisible: nor did any greater, or more pertinent relation, subsist, between the Dickey, and the matter before this Society, than between the Proprietor, and the Gentleman, who had used such freedoms with the brute.

The Ba of the sheep, which then raised such a ba of laughing, even in the Westminster Forum, he deemed liable to a like interpretation.

The *vox populi* he never considered, nay, Sir,

it borders on impiety to call it the *vox Dei*. To the One, belongs Omnipotence, with every possible perfection: to the other, imbecillity and ignorance. This we trust requires no proof. Every breast assents to the fact. Besides, these petitions are absolutely managed by party-men. To prove this, he craved leave to read a part of the petition, of the corporation, of the town of Reading, whereon he most sensibly commented; and noticed, that even language had been tortured, to make it breathe sentiments inimical to Administration. In a word, let Gentlemen, before they resolve a question of this importance, for a moment revise the various stages of the unnatural war, that hath continued so long; and then say, whether or not Associations, and Petitions, had paved the way to all the devastation and bloodshed, which had deluged the plains, of the once happy, and fertile America.

Our humorist rose, and loudly said, Mr. President, I get up to defend three characters—myself—the Devil—and Balaam's Ass. But the company recollecting, that he had spoke the preceding evening, and that there were some Gentlemen wishing to speak, who had not yet spoke at all; we, to our sorrow, lost the wit of the intended defence, as he was forced, rather against his will, to sit down, and give way to

A Gentleman, who also jocosely introduced himself

himself to the question, and reprehended the first Speaker in very keen terms. The petitions did not arise from the sources, or were conducted by men of the cast which had been described. They resulted from the intense feelings of oppression, long—too long! patiently borne; from the weight and multitude of the taxes, which if not lessened, seemed to threaten our political destruction. The characters of those who guided them, wore the brightest hue, yea, they were of a reputation, which slander itself dared not accuse. He, moreover, thought it the duty which every member owed his constituents, if called upon, to present, and to support these. And should any dependant on a Minister, refuse obedience to so equitable a demand, he hoped they would not be forgot at the next general election. This was the time to reduce the Civil List, when the commerce of the kingdom so dreadfully languished—when that revenue had been so abused—when the cry of grievances was so real, and so general—and when there are peculiar reasons for hoping, that attention will be paid to the mode, pointed out for that purpose. In the beginning of another Parliament, who would wonder at the rejection of such petitions!

A third Gentleman arose, who seized the opportunity of talking, without either speaking to the question, or putting himself to the trouble

of keeping close by any tenet whatever. His speech resembled a sermon that would do for any text. It consisted of judicious remarks, which he had made in travelling, of just and striking thoughts, arising from well-established facts, or from experience. He informed us, that he had been present at some of these County Meetings — described the classes of people who composed them, their ideas of public affairs, together with a narrative of their distresses, which indisputably called for an immediate remedy. He concluded in very bad English, with a sort of defecant upon the matter: from all which, the Society did not appear to think, that they had received either much entertainment, or instruction.

The subsequent Speaker, replied to the idea advanced by an ingenious Gentleman, of the tenor of the present petitions, not being in Confirmatione Chartarum. And clearly proved, that there was no period, when it was improper for the sufferers to complain; though under tyrants, or prerogative Princes, complaints might be disregarded, or the simple preferring of them, hazard the individual's life who did it. When, Mr. President, shall Englishmen freely speak their mind, if not now? I have heard — oh wonderful to tell! economy attributed to the present Ministry, and I sincerely believe it, in
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the following sense—they have confined their favours entirely to their own creatures ; to satisfy them ; they have not earned a lawful competence ; they have pillaged wherever their hands could reach ; nay, to load the granaries of their select friends, they have beggared the nation. Except a like inverse application be permitted, he also denied they were munificent : for they had been so, to only those, who had tamely surrendered to them, both virtue and conscience.

It had been said in the course of the argument, subjects were not qualified to redress their own grievances : I beg leave to ask in what sense they are disqualified ? and who are the persons that will effectively redress them ? Not those in authority, sure, since that would be the right hand warring against the left. They themselves are the occasions, the springs, the promoters of these calamities, consequently reformation cannot be expected ; it never will proceed from the men, who have audaciously violated the dearest rights of the people, and the spirit of our once healthful constitution. Nor was it less unjust to argue against the Petitions, because the scheme originated from Minority : whose sole aim and ambition, it had been urged, terminated in the enjoyment of those places, whence they so ardently wish to eject the present

possessors. None in this assembly can be ignorant, that several of the most strenuous friends to the business, were actually in distinguished offices under the Crown : others again, are the most independent men in the nation. Dare even calumny herself, call a Sir George S—— a party-man ? One Gentleman told us, by way of satirizing the virtue he hath not tried to imitate : permit them, meaning the Minority, to succeed, and all will be well. We reply, Should politics run in pretty much the same channel, the directors thereof at least will be different, and from direful experience, we may conclude, they cannot be worse. The state has been compared to a vessel in a storm, and what can we liken the Petitioners to ? said one, on the opposite side of the room—save to fools or madmen, who wish to throw the sailors overboard. Specious as this allusion seems, we deny the inference ; it is not fact. In reason—in justice—in policy—the voice of the people should be heard, and may it be heard from the extremity of the Empire, to the center of the Court !

The Prince of Orators next, and last arose, to whom we have already given our mite of approbation, confessing we cannot praise him equal to his desert ; and who at this time delivered one of the best speeches we ever remember to have heard, in that, or any other assembly.

The

The audience were charmed, and many Gentlemen declared, they never saw applause so unanimously given.

He informed us, he was called up from a regard to himself, finding some parts of his speech the preceding evening, had either been misrepresented, or misunderstood. Axioms require no demonstration, and he looked on the present question to be one. He pursued the ingenious and learned Gentleman who opened the debate, through every sentence he had uttered, and most minutely scrutinized the import of the whole. He proved that the Meetings came within the act, which had been so eminently insisted upon; there not being one of the petitions that had not more than three Justices of the Peace, few, if any, but what were honoured with the interest and name of Privy Counsellors. Taxes, Offices, Places, Pensions, Emoluments, he largely discoursed of—the time of war he examined in every possible point of view—he adverted to the figure of the ship, which had so often occurred in the debate—begged the mariners to keep awake, and be active, or the only sound reaching their insatuated ears, would be the rushing of the last wave, that consigned them to the depths of political and final ruin. A little virtue yet remains—this is the critical moment—use it like the posterity of those, whose
valour

valour gained what we now deplore! having lost it through wickedness or ignorance. Let the sons of Britain emulate the venerable Roman, and, if they cannot preserve, be theirs the mournful honour, to die, either with, or for, the liberties of their Country.

The question being put—It was carried—That the County Meetings are likely to produce salutary effects.

The following Epistle appeared in the Morning Chronicle, of February 4th, 1780.

Epistle from Kitty Curious, to Martha Mark'em.

YOUR Letter, dear Patty, well pleas'd, I received,
 Since friendship, in absence, is thereby relieved:
 And to know how our friends at a distance go on,
 Peculiarly so, if they live in the town,
 Is a rapture to us, who're moped up among books,
 And have nothing to please us, but cards or dull books.
 Yet books I admire, but for all things there's time,
 Or else, *entre nous*, I should not write in rhyme,

You spoke of the Forum in terms so beguiling,
 My fancy was pleased, and I sallied forth smiling,
 To make up a party, and visit a place,
 Replete with encomiums from fashion's gay race,
 Nor only from them, for my grave uncle Joe,
 Declares he'd be there, were it not for his toe,
 Every night in the season—for hark ye me, Kit,
 You there may learn Politics—Logic—and Wit.

Fanny

Faany Miles—Sophy Jennet—our Harriot, and I,
Left the Don with his pipe, honest Towser, and Fly:
And drove up to town with all possible haste,
Determin'd the pleasure of hearing to taste.
When arriv'd at the Forum our wonder increas'd,
For trust me, dear Patty, our thoughts were a jest;
With respect to the numbers assembled to hold,
The charms of Debate—Britons like—free and bold.

The question that ev'ning was—"Whether our Kings,
Ere the blest Revolution, with angel-like wings,
Held a shield over Britain to keep her secure,
Could hurt her more deeply by Invested Pow'r:
Or the Crown's subtle Influence since hath effected,
With insinuations by far less suspected?"

Four Speakers met plaudits most highly deserv'd,
For argument solid—by reason enerv'd.
Sense hung on their lips—and fair Freedom stood by,
Had Slav'ry been there he'd have utter'd a sigh!
How should it be other, when Walker declaims,
For Chamberlayne ever at liberty aims:
And, proud of her charms, all fatigues would endure,
In the hearts of his brethren her throne to secure.

Debates being ended, the question was mov'd,
Present measures by far were the most disapprov'd.

And now, as in your's, you the President mention,
To forget him entirely is not my intention.
We all lik'd him well, and observ'd 'mongst ourselves,
What pity it was there should ever be elves,
Mere pitiful mongrels, occasional writers,
At men of more knowledge who fain would be biter.
T' other day in the papers I saw a fly hint,
(The writer no doubt at the chair had a squint)

That

That the President was not quite fit for the task :
 If I knew the poor wretch, I a question would ask :
 Whether fifteen long years in academic groves,
 Where sport all the Sciences—Muses—and Loves ;
 With publicly speaking for ten years or more,
 Would not give a Cleric abundantly pow'r,
 'To preside in a Forum, or other learn'd places,
 With merited praises, instead of disgraces !

The evening thus pleasantly ended, we meant
 'To retire, but were frustrated in our intent ;
 For the Demon of discord—of envy—or spite,
 Rose suddenly up to disturb our delight :—
 With tone magisterial a motion I make,
 That at seven the President shall the chair take.
 I second the motion, another replied,

While numberless tongues alteration decried :
 Confusion grew gen'ral, e'en wit was all vain,
 And we, trembling females stood up in great pain.

What angered us most, was one moment to hear,
 The same voices cry one thing, next 'gainst it appear.
 So much like a rabble, I wondered, I own,
 At that instant, where sense and politeness were flown.
 'Twas certain the leader of this pretty riot,
 Like dog in the fable, ne'er lov'd to be quiet ;
 But finding his speeches were little regarded,
 Determin'd all pleasure should then be retarded :
 Or sinister motives I strongly suspect,
 Made him with ev'ry member the cause might reject.
 Since, like poor trading justice, with sixpence in view,
 A pitiful fellow all mischief would do.

Had

Had the women dar'd speak, what a charming oration,
 We'd have made, to prevent e'en the least alteration.
 For should it prevail, where's our tea, my dear Pat?
 And females, you know, would be dead without that.
 Eight of clock is as soon as the Beau-monde are able,
 To get o'er the etiquette of the tea-table:
 So an earlier hour might be worse suited far,
 For many good Speakers, who chuse to be there,
 Two hours quick debate, enliven'd with spirit,
 More beauties than three, sans the same, could inherit.
 'Twould be tedious and dull, nay, in fine, 'twould be death;
 And some should lament, with a faltering breath,
 That a place she had honour'd with well-claim'd applause,
 A martyr should die to subversion of laws †.

Farewell, my dear Patty, 'tis time to retire,
 My love to your aunt, and respects to the Squire.

KITTY CURIOUS.

For a variety of reasons, we think it improper to make any strictures on the above poetical epistle, especially as several judges have declared the sentiments tolerably lively, the language easy, and the verse rather harmonious. Yet we reckon it our duty to inform Kitty Curious, and the public at large, of a little mistake she hath committed,

† In the printed laws of the Forum, eight is the hour of meeting.

committed—Chamberlayne Walker, Esq, did not speak that evening, nor any other, at the Forum, save one, in the early part of the season, and the speech was laid before the public. The Gentleman's name whom she meant to praise, is, E——, whose speeches must ever be an honour to that, or whatever other Society he may thus oblige.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

A C A R D.

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